

THE
FABLES OF GAY.
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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THE FABLES OF JOHN GAY.

THE FABLES OF JOHN GAY

WITH
Biographical and Critical Introduction
and Bibliographical Appendix.



EDITED BY
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A NEW EDITION,
*WITH ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIX DRAWINGS
BY WILLIAM HARVEY.*



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Dedication.

TO
HIS HIGHNESS
WILLIAM,
DUKE OF CUMBERLAND,
THESE NEW FABLES,
INVENTED FOR HIS AMUSEMENT,
ARE HUMBLY DEDICATED
BY
HIS HIGHNESS'S
MOST FAITHFUL AND
MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,
JOHN GAY.

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PREFACE.

COMPARATIVELY few words are necessary to introduce this volume to the public through the medium of the Chandos Classics. The popularity of these "Fables" has been proved by the numerous editions which have appeared from time to time in this and other countries.

Apart from the "Fables" themselves, this volume contains a fuller biographical notice than has previously been issued, in which the writer has taken advantage of many interesting facts which have recently come to light in connection with Gay's life and works; he has incorporated in the sketch some valuable and interesting statements made at Barnstaple, on the occasion of the bi-centenary of Gay's birth in that town. Also for the first time in any complete biography, a correct statement appears as to the date of the poet's birth, previous writers having accepted an erroneous statement on this point. One other important feature of this work is the Bibliographical Appendix, which contains, as far as possible, a record of all the editions of the fables known. That it may be incomplete is quite within the bounds of probability, as new editions are being frequently brought under the writer's notice. But the list here given includes all the entries in the British Museum printed catalogue, and many others, copies of which the British Museum does not appear to possess, but which are in the writer's own collection. In connection with the Bibliography, the

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writer is indebted to the kind assistance of Dr. R. Garnett, of the British Museum ; Dr. T. N. Brushfield, of Budleigh Salterton ; the Rev. J. Ingle Dredge, of Buckland Brewer ; to Mr. Austin Dobson, editor of the latest edition of the "Fables" ; and to several of the leading publishers with whom he has been in communication. On biographical matters some valuable hints have been received from Mr. J. R. Chanter, of Barnstaple, who was one of the chief promoters of the "Gay Bicentennial" at Barnstaple, in 1885. In the preparation of the biography many authorities have been consulted, and the opinions of various writers given upon Gay's works in general.

In conclusion we have not introduced here an essay on Fable, for the simple reason that this and many other points will be found amply treated in the Life and notices of the Works of our author.

W. H. K. WRIGHT.

Plymouth, July, 1889.

LIFE OF JOHN GAY,

WITH

NOTICES OF HIS WORKS.

THE materials for a biography of John Gay are not very abundant, and, what little there was, has been for the most part included in the various memoirs which have from time to time been published with his works. Amongst the most noticeable sketches of the life of Gay may be mentioned that by E. Curl, published in 1733, the year after the poet's death; another, by the Rev. William Coxe, published at Salisbury in 1796, as an introduction to the "Fables," and several times re-published; Dr. Johnson's "Life of Gay," included in "Lives of the Poets," which has been frequently published with the author's collected works as well as in connection with the "Fables."

Another biography, having the stamp of family authority, appeared in 1820, in the little work called "Gay's Chair." This was written by the Rev. Joseph Baller, the poet's nephew.

In previous editions of these "Fables," issued by the present publishers, appeared a short memoir by the Rev. Octavius Freire Owen; another memoir is attached to the edition of the "British Poets," edited by the Rev. George Gillfillan; some critical notes appear in Thackeray's "English Humorists," and the latest memoir—that by Austin Dobson—appeared as late as 1882.

The latter writer begins his memoir with the statement that "No material addition, in the way of supplementary information, can now be made to the frequently reprinted 'Life of Gay,' in Johnson's 'Poets,' or to the genial and kindly sketch in Thackeray's 'English Humorists.'"

Recent investigations have, however, brought to light some further particulars, which we shall endeavour to incorporate with this, the latest effort to furnish a true and reliable biography of the talented author of the "Fables."

In the first place all his biographers, from Curl to

Dobson, erroneously state that Gay was born in 1688, instead of 1685. It was left to some enthusiastic natives of Barnstaple to correct this error, which they did by bringing to light the entry of his baptism in the parish register of the old church of that town. From this it appears that he was baptized at Barnstaple on the 16th of September, 1685. This discovery was made public at the celebration of the bicentenary of the poet's birth at Barnstaple, in 1885, when an interesting ceremony took place in that town.

As to the place of the poet's birth, considerable doubt has existed, and still exists in the minds of some. Although the people of Barnstaple claim Gay as a native of that town, because of the entry in the parish register, yet there is no proof that he was not born at some village or homestead not far distant, and brought into the town to be baptized. One writer says he was born at Exeter; another specifies Torrington, a third names Frithelstock, others cite Barnstaple; while the latest theory is that he was born in the parish of Landkey (Newlands), near Barnstaple. This theory is founded upon some lines which appear in one of Gay's poems, entitled "A Devonshire Hill," first published in the little work already mentioned "Gay's Chair." These lines are as follows:—

"But the hill of all hills, the most pleasing to me,
Is famed Cotton,¹ the pride of *North Devon*;
When its summit I climb, O, I then seem to be
Just as if I approached nearer heaven!
When with troubles depress'd to this hill I repair,
My spirits then instantly rally;
It was near this bless'd spot, I first drew vital air,
So—a hill I prefer to a valley."

Gay, it appears, sprang from a very old and influential family, several generations of whom had resided at Goldsworthy, in Parkham, Devon, while from the latter part of the sixteenth century, until the early portion of the present century, the Gays were located at Frithelstock. Gay was the youngest of five children. His mother died in 1694, when the lad was about eight years old. In the

¹ Cotton Hill, near Barnstaple.

following year he lost his father, when it appears that an uncle, Thomas, who resided at Barnstaple, undertook the education of the orphans.

It does not appear that the Gays were ill provided for; in fact, it would seem that their pecuniary circumstances were moderately good. The house in Joy Street, at the end of High Street, called the Red Cross, belonged to the Gay family, and presumably to the poet's father. The poet being the younger son, was, in accordance with a frequent practice of that time, apprenticed to a mercer in London. John Gay was educated at the Grammar School, Barnstaple, becoming a pupil of Mr. Rayner, then head master, but this gentleman shortly after removing to Tiverton, his place was supplied by Mr. Robert Luck, under whose tuition Gay continued some time and made considerable progress.

It is more than probable that Gay first exhibited his fondness for literary pursuits while at this school, and in fact a gentleman who had been Gay's schoolfellow, stated that his first poetical effort was in consequence of one of his playmates shooting a swallow in Barnstaple churchyard.

It appears also that Mr. Luck's pupils were in the habit of performing plays at stated seasons, and that copies of verses are still extant (some of them in Latin), which were recited on these occasions, with prologues and epilogues that were spoken by the scholars; but whether young Gay was the author of any of these, or ever exhibited his talent in this way is not known. Mr. Luck (Gay's schoolmaster) was himself a considerable versifier, and published a volume of poems in 1736. In the preface to this volume the author says: "This Candour I shall hope, because I have endeavour'd to deserve it, from those gentlemen, whom I have had the honour to educate. They ought (I think) to read my performances as favourably as I examin'd theirs. One of that number, now a great, and (what is more valuable) a very good man, will forgive the liberty I take to print his Translation of the 15th Ode of Hor. Epod. done by him when young under my care. I read it then with too much pleasure ever to forget it. 'Tis to gratify his modesty I conceal

his name." Although there is no actual evidence to prove that the master was referring to Gay, his old pupil, yet the suggestion to the mind is very strong, the only objection being that whereas Gay died in 1732, Mr. Luck's book did not appear until 1736, and it is only natural to suppose that the master would have made some more distinct reference to the pupil who had by that time won all his literary laurels. It is singular to note that the only actual reference to Gay to be found in Mr. Luck's book, occurs in "The Female Phaeton," addressed to the Duke of Queensberry and Dover—Gay's great patron.

"O Queensberry ! cou'd happy Gay
This off'ring to thee bring,
'Tis his, my lord (he'd, smiling, say),
Who taught your Gay to sing."

A very interesting relic of Gay's school days has recently come to light. The ancient oak fittings of some of the original pews of the old church at Barnstaple, having been found hidden under some modern surface of thin deal or cloth, one of these was found defaced by names cut over it. These boards were mostly broken up in getting out, but one piece, which had two names and a date, 1695, was preserved, and is as follows :—



The above is a facsimile taken from a rubbing of the identical fragment now preserved in the Barnstaple Athenæum. There is no reason to doubt that this John

Gay was the poet, and if the date refers to him, he would then have been ten years old—the age when boys generally do such things. The pew may have been the seat of grammar school boys, on which they amused themselves during the sermon by cutting their names.

Gay was certainly a true student, and well grounded in the classics; and Mr. Austin Dobson observes on this point that there is still preserved in the "Forster Library," at South Kensington, a large paper copy of Maittaire's "Horace" (Tonson and Watts, 1715), which contains Gay's autograph, and is copiously annotated in his beautiful handwriting. "This of itself," says Mr. Dobson, "should be sufficient to refute the aspersions cast upon his scholarship by a recent critic of Swift; for it affords certain evidence that, even at twenty-seven—and perhaps at a much later period—he was a diligent student of the charming lyrist and satirist, who, above all others, commends himself to the attention of idle men."

Gay was sent to London, and bound apprentice to a mercer; but a shop confinement, the chatter of women customers, and lying, in a double sense, behind the counter, were fatigues he could not by any means brook, and he writes thus in a complaint to his friend Mr. Pope:—

"Long in the noisy Town I've been immur'd,
Respir'd in Smoke, and all its cares endur'd;
Where News and Politicks divide Mankind,
And Schemes of State involve th' uneasy mind;
Faction embroils the World, and ev'ry Tongue
Is moved by Flatt'ry, or with Scandal hung.
Friendship, for Sylvan Shades, the Palace flies,
Where all must yield to Int'rest's dearer ties;
Each rival Machiavel with Envy burns,
And Honesty forsakes them all by turns;
While Calumny upon each Party's thrown,
Which both promote, and both alike disown.
Fatigu'd at last: a calm Retreat I chose,
And sooth'd my harrass'd Mind with sweet Repose;
Where Fields, and, Shades, and the refreshing Clime,
Inspire the Sylvan Song and prompt my Rhime."¹

Whatever may have been the cause, Gay suffered from the unwonted confinement to which he was subjected in

¹ Rural Sports: a Georgic. Address to Mr. Pope.

London, and was compelled to give up his situation and return to Devonshire, where his native air soon recruited his powers. He stayed awhile at the house of his uncle, his mother's brother, Rev. John Hanmer, the Nonconformist minister of the town. After a few months' residence in the hospitable home of his uncle, his health being restored, he returned again to London. This was, it appears, his last visit to Barnstaple, though not to Devonshire.

Gay's natural genius for poetry soon developed itself, as he does not appear to have at first sought or obtained any regular employment, but lived for the most part as a private gentleman, and thus he had plenty of time to follow the bent of his inclinations.

As far as can be ascertained, his earliest published poem was entitled "*Wine*," this being produced in 1708. It is to be found in an edition of Gay's poetical works, published in Edinburgh in 1777, and, we believe, this was its first appearance in any collected edition, for it was not included in the celebrated quarto edition of 1720. Appended to the poem is the following note: "In a letter from Aaron Hill to Mr. Savage, published in the former's works, Vol. I., 339, speaking of Mr. Gay, he has these words, 'That poem you speak of, called *Wine*, he printed in the year 1710, as I remember. I am sure I have one amongst my pamphlets. I will look for it and send it to you, if it will be of use or satisfaction to any gentleman of your acquaintance.'" This is the piece Mr. Hill mentions, and it is here printed from a copy of the original edition.

In 1712, Gay was appointed secretary to the Duchess of Monmouth,¹ and this post gave him, we presume, a sufficient emolument and the coveted leisure for the continuance of his literary pursuits. He soon became well known to the leading literary men of the time, and formed the acquaintance of several great men, as well as of the most eminent wits and poets of the age, such as Addison,

¹ Lady Mary Scot, daughter and heiress of the Duke of Buccleuch, widow of the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, natural son of Charles II. who was beheaded in the reign of James II.

Sir Richard Steele, Dean Purcell, Pope, Swift, and others.

In 1712 he contributed a translation of one of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," first published in the famous "Rape of the Lock" volume of Lintot's "Miscellaneous Poems and Translations," and afterwards incorporated in Garth's Ovid—the noble folio volume, published by Tonson in 1727. Gay's production will be found in Book ix. of this edition.

Having made the acquaintance of Pope, he dedicated to him his "Rural Sports: a Georgic," a few lines of which have been already quoted. This was first published in 1713. Pope was evidently well pleased with this attention on the part of the aspiring poet, and from this time the two men contracted a close friendship, which lasted till death.

Gay evinced, in "Rural Sports," a considerable knowledge of country life, and gave a very accurate description of those manly sports and exercises which were then very much in vogue, and in which it may be inferred he himself was skilled. His advice to the disciples of Walton is a case in point:—

"You must not every worm promiscuous use:
Judgment will tell thee proper bait to choose:
The worm that draws a long immoderate size
The trout abhors, and the rank morsel flies;
And if too small, the naked fraud's in sight,
And fear forbids, while hunger does invite.
Those baits will best reward the fisher's pains
Whose polish'd tails a shining yellow stains;
Cleanse them from filth, to give a tempting gloss,
Cherish the sullied reptile race with moss;
Amid the verdant bed they thrive, they toil,
And from their bodies wipe their native soil."

Besides this, his descriptions of country scenes are full of poetry and a thorough appreciation of the beauties of nature.

This work was quickly followed by another, "The Mohocks: A Tragi-Comical Farce," which, according to the title-page, was to have been acted near the Watch House in Covent Garden. Although published in 1712, it was never put upon the stage. The subject of the

piece was an exposition of the doings of a set of mischievous young men, who were distinguished by the title "Mohocks."¹

These miscreants, on the presumption of their being protected by rank or fortune from punishment for their errors, used to maltreat every inoffensive person whom they met abroad, under the idea of frolic.

These prowlers were thus referred to by Gay in another of his works, "Trivia," Book III.:—

"Now is the Time that Rakes their Revells keep;
Kindlers of Riot, Enemies of Sleep.
His scatter'd Pence the flying *Nicker*² flings.
And with the Copper Show'rs the casement rings,
Who has not heard the Scowrer's Midnight Fame?
Who has not trembled at the *Mohock's* name?
Was there a Watchman took his hourly Rounds,
Safe from their Blows, or new-invented Wounds?
I pass their desp'rate Deeds, and Mischiefs done
Where from *Snow-hill* black sleepy Torrents run;
How Matrons, hoop'd within the Hogshead's Womb,
Were tumbled furious thence, the rolling Tomb
O'er the Stones thunders, bounds from Side to Side,
So *Regulus* to save his Country dy'd."

Gay's poem, "The Fan," in three books, was probably published in the early part of the year 1713, for Pope, in a letter dated August 23rd of that year, says, "I am very much recreated and refreshed with the news of the advancement of 'The Fan,' which I doubt not will delight the eye and sense of the fair, so long as that agreeable machine shall play in the hands of posterity. I am glad your 'Fan' is mounted so soon, but I would have you varnish and glaze it at your leisure, and polish the sticks as much as you can. You may then cause it to be borne in the hands of both sexes, no less in England than in China, where it is ordinary for a mandarin to fan himself cool after a debate, and a statesman to hide his face with it while he tells a grave lie."

Gay's first attempt at dramatic writing was in "The

¹ *Mohock*. A class of ruffian who at one time infested the streets of London. So called from the Indian Mohawks. One of their "new inventions" was to roll persons down Snow Hill in a tub; another was to overturn coaches on rubbish heaps.

² Gentlemen, who delighted to break windows with half-pence.

Wife of Bath," first acted at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1713. Although it proved a failure, he was not discouraged by his want of success, but steadily pursued the course which he had mapped out for himself, and wherein he afterwards gained so much fame. This piece was altered and revised by the author in 1730, and again put upon the stage, but with no better success; in fact, it received worse treatment from the audience than at its first production, notwithstanding the author's reputation had become considerably enhanced by later works.

Gay's position of ease in the household of the Duchess of Monmouth was, however, of short duration, for in June 1714, we find him writing to Swift, "I am quite off with the Duchess of Monmouth," and Arbuthnot informs Swift, "the Duchess has turned him off, which I am afraid will make the poor man's condition worse instead of better."

But the loss of one influential friend, was, in this case, the gain of others, for he now came under the notice of two great patrons of letters, Oxford and Bolingbroke, who, at the recommendation of Swift and Arbuthnot, extended their favours to him in a very practical manner. His Pastorals were printed at the express desire of Lord Bolingbroke, to whom he had shown them in manuscript. He himself refers to this in his dedication—

"Lo I, who erst beneath a tree
Sung Bumkinet and Bowzybee,
And Blowzelind and Marian hight,
In apron blue or apron white,
Now write my sonnets in a book,
For my good Lord of Bolingbroke.

* * * *

With whose fair name I'll deck my strain;
St. John right courteous to the swain.
For thus he told me on a day,
Trim are thy Sonnets, gentle Gay!
And, certes, mirth it were to see
Thy joyous madrigals twice three,
With preface meet and notes profound,
Imprinted fair, and well y-bound,
All suddenly then home I sped,
And did ev'n as my Lord had said."

This work "The Shepherd's Week," was written, it is supposed, at the suggestion of Pope, who was at the time

engaged in a literary feud with Steele and other writers on the merits of the pastoral style of poetry. Steele, in some papers contributed to the *Guardian*, had praised Ambrose Philips, as the pastoral writer of his time. Pope, who had himself published pastorals, not to be outdone, not only drew up a comparison of his own works with those of Philips, but incited Gay to write in the same strain, and to show, that if it be necessary to copy nature with minuteness, rural life must be treated in the same way, and exhibited in its ordinary every-day garb: and with all the grossness which is its chief characteristic. This purpose was well carried out in the "Shepherd's Week," although it was somewhat marred in its object by the Proem, which was written in an obsolete style of language, more akin to the romantic pastorals which it was intended to satirize. However, these pastorals became highly popular, and were read with delight by many who did not care a jot for the cause in dispute, but who regarded them as fair pictures of the rural life of the period.

About this period Gay was made secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, then ambassador to the Court of Hanover, a position from which he hoped to obtain great and speedy advancement. Gay's circumstances were at this time so low that, having obtained the position, he had not the means to furnish himself as became the appointment. In this difficulty he addressed what he calls "The Epigrammatical Petition of John Gay," to Lord Oxford, the Lord Treasurer:—

"I'm no more to converse with the swains,
But go where fine people resort:
One can live without money on plains,
But never without it at court.
If, when with the swains I did gambol,
I array'd me in silver and blue;
When abroad, and in courts, I shall ramble,
Pray, my lord, how much money will do?"

Arbuthnot, in a letter to Swift, refers to the same when he says:—"You know that Gay goes to Hanover, and my Lord Treasurer has promised to equip him. Monday is the day of departure; and he is now dancing attendance

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for money to buy him shoes, stockings, and linen." The result of this appeal was the receipt of one hundred pounds from the Treasury, with which Gay went away happy, in the brighter prospects which seemed to be dawning upon him. One of his letters from Hanover, to his friend Swift, dated August the 16th, 1714, is full of characteristic passages. "You remember, I suppose," he says, "that I was to write you abundance of letters from Hanover; but as one of the most distinguishing qualities of a politician is secrecy, you must not expect from me any arcanas of State. There is another thing that is necessary to establish the character of a politician; which is, to seem always to be full of affairs of State; to know the consultations of the cabinet council—when at the same time all his politics are collected from newspapers. Which of these two causes my secrecy is owing to, I leave you to determine. There is yet one thing more, that is extremely necessary for a foreign minister, which he can no more be without than an artizan without his terms; I mean, the terms of his art. I call it an art or science, because I think the King of *France* hath established an academy to instruct the young *Machiavellians* of his country in the deep and profound science of politics. To the end that I might be qualified for an employment of this nature, and not only be qualified myself, but (to speak in the style of Sir *John Falstaff*) be the cause of qualifications in others, I have made it my business to read memoirs, treaties, &c. And as a dictionary of law terms is thought necessary for young beginners, so I thought a dictionary of terms of State would be no less useful for young politicians. The terms of politics being not so numerous as to swell into a volume, especially in time of peace (for in time of war all the terms of fortification are included), I thought fit to extract them in the same manner, for the benefit of young practitioners as a famous author hath compiled his learned treatise of the law, called the 'Doctor and Student.' I have not made any great progress in this piece; but, however, I will just give you a specimen of it, which will make you in the same manner a judge of the design and nature of this

U.S.N.M.Y. W. E. HERRARD

Date

10. 26 '05

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treatise." Then follows a dialogue between the *Politician* and the *Student*, which is full of shrewd suggestions and witty sayings.

During his short stay at Hanover, Gay attracted the notice of the Electoral Princess, afterwards Queen Caroline, who asked him for a copy of his poems; but, alas! he had not one to bestow, which caused Arbuthnot to remark, "Is he not a true poet who had not one of his books to give the Princess, who asked for one?" Gay was again disappointed in his hopes of preferment, for the death of Queen Anne caused the withdrawal of Lord Clarendon from the embassy at Hanover, which had only lasted fifteen days, and he returned to London in greater straits than ever. According to Swift, the change in the poet's fortune was chiefly due to the fact that he had dedicated his "*Shepherd's Week*" to Bolingbroke, who was not in favour with the new monarch.

Gay was, however, equal to the occasion, and, acting either upon his own instincts or upon the promptings of his friend, Pope, he did his best to improve the occasion and write himself in favour with the Court. He accordingly wrote a "*Poetical Epistle to a Lady*," occasioned by the arrival of Her Royal Highness (the Princess of Wales), in which occurs the following plaintive appeal:—

"I left the Muses to frequent the Court;
Pensive each night, from room to room I walk'd,
To one I bow'd, and with another talk'd;
Enquir'd what news, or such a Lady's name,
And did the next day, and the next the same.
Places I found, were daily giv'n away,
And yet no friendly Gazette mentioned Gay.
I ask'd a Friend what method to pursue:
He cry'd I want a Place as well as you.
Another ask'd me, why I had not writ;
A Poet owes his Fortune to his Wit.
Strait I reply'd with what a Courtly Grace,
Flows easy Verse from Him that has a place!
Had Virgil ne'er at Court improv'd his Strains,
He still had sung of Flocks and homely Swains;
And had not Horace sweet Preferment found,
The Roman Lyre had never learnt to sound."

"This seems to have obtained for him some transient favour, for both the Prince and Princess went to see his

play 'What d'ye call it,' first acted at Drury Lane, in 1715. This ingenious and entertaining little piece, which is to this day (1782) frequently performed, is an inoffensive and good-natured burlesque on the absurdities in some of the tragedies then most in favour; particularly 'Venice Preserved,' the principal characters in which are ridiculed with much humour and some justice, in the parts of Filbert, Peascod, and Kitty Carrol. There is great originality in the manner of it, great poetry in the language, and true satire in the conduct of it, on which accounts, though it may be 'caviare to the multitude,' it will ever be sure to please the better few.¹ This piece became so popular that it excited the envy of the playwrights, and provoked a reply which was written by Messrs. Theobald and Griffin, entitled "The Key to the What d'ye call it?" In this, as Gay declared, he was called a blockhead, and Mr. Pope a knave.

His next work "Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London," which appeared in 1716, was of a totally different character, and gained him a more solid reputation. On this work, next to his "Beggars Opera" and "Fables" his fame may be said to rest. Gay, in the advertisement to the first edition, owned to having received several hints from Dr. Swift. The poem is a very readable one, and gives a very close and accurate picture of the street life of London in the early part of the last century, thus doing for the city what in his "Shepherd's Week" he had previously done for the country.

This was speedily followed by another dramatic piece, entitled "Three Hours after Marriage." It was the joint production of Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot, and was brought out at Drury Lane in 1717. It was, however, deservedly censured, and its authors met with well-merited disgrace at the hands of the public. It was an effort to burlesque Dr. Woodward, a geologist of estimable character. Although Gay's name appears alone on the title-page, it does not appear that he had very much to do with the

¹ Biographia Dramatica, p. 401.



work, the chief characters in which were most certainly the creations of Pope and Arbuthnot.

Shortly after this Gay wrote an Epistle to the Earl of Burlington, giving an account of a journey to Exeter, whither he was sent by his Lordship. This Epistle has many amusing incidents, and opens with Mr. Pope's robbing the Earl's orchard,—

“At Chiswick strips all Boughs within his reach
The purple Vine, blue Plumb, and blushing Peach.”

At Axminster, a very diverting adventure occurs to the travellers, which he thus describes :—

“We climb'd the hills, when starry night arose,
And Axminster affords a kind repose.
The maid, subdued by fees, her trunk unlocks,
And gives the cleanly aid of dowlas smocks :
Meantime our shirts her busy fingers rub,
While the soap lathers o'er the foaming tub.
If women's geer such pleasing dreams incite,
Lend us your smocks, ye damsels ! every night.
We rise, our beards demand the barber's art ;
A female enters, and performs the part :
The weighty golden chain adorns her neck,
And three gold rings her skilful hand bedeck :
Smooth o'er our chin her easy fingers move
Soft as when Venus strok'd the beard of Jove.”

This poem was republished in the “English Illustrated Magazine” for 1887, with some very charming and highly appropriate sketches by Hugh Thomson.

Some time during the year 1717, Gay went to Paris, as secretary to Mr. Pulteney, afterwards Earl of Bath. From hence he wrote a racy description of the “Fopperies of that Nation.” In this short poem, Gay draws a beautiful picture of Fénelon's Telemachus, and concludes with a panegyric on England :—

“Hear all ye princes ! who the world control,
What cares, what terrors, haunt the tyrant's soul ;
His constant train are anger, fear, distrust.
To be a king is to be good and just ;
His people he protects, their rights he saves,
And scorns to rule a wretched race of slaves.
Happy, thrice happy, shall the monarch reign,
Where guardian laws despotic power restrain !
There shall the ploughshare break the stubborn land,
And bending harvest tire the peasant's hand :

There Liberty her settled mansion boasts,
 There Commerce plenty brings from foreign coasts.
 O Britain ! guard thy laws, thy rights defend,
 So shall these blessings to thy sons descend !"

It will be seen that Gay was a Bohemian by disposition, never so happy as when rambling about from place to place. Swift rallies Gay on this propensity :—

"If your ramble was on horseback, I am glad of it, upon account of your health; but I know your arts of patching up a journey between stage coaches and friends' coaches: for you are as arrant a cockney as any hosiery in Cheapside. One clean shirt, with two cravats, and as many handkerchiefs, make up your equipage; and as for your night gown, it is clear from Homer, that Agamemnon rose without one. I have often had it in my head to put it into yours, that you ought to have some great work in scheme, which may take up seven years to finish, besides two or three under ones, that may add another thousand pound to your stock; and then I shall be in less pain about you. I know you can find dinners, but then you love twelve-penny coaches too well, without considering that the interest of a whole thousand pounds brings you but half-a-crown a day."

Gay's next venture was the publication of his poems by subscription, in two handsome quarto volumes, in 1720. The nature and extent of his popularity at this time may be gathered from the large and influential list of subscribers which accompanies the work. The success of his enterprise was great, for the author realized about £1,000. The Prince and Princess of Wales gave him very liberal support, the Duke of Chandos and the Earl of Burlington each took fifty copies, and Mr. Pulteney twenty-five. Gay acknowledges this substantial patronage in his "Epistle to Paul Methuen, Esq." :—

"Yet let me not of grievances complain,
 Who (though the meanest of the Muse's train)
 Can boast subscriptions to my humble lays,
 And mingle profit with my little praise."

Gay being thus master of a large sum was in doubt as to the best means for its disposal, so he called a meeting

of his friends, and solicited their advice, although in the end he ignored all their suggestions. Lewis, steward to Lord Oxford, advised him to trust it to the Funds, and live on the interest; Arbuthnot, to live upon the principal; Pope and Swift to buy an annuity. But Gay was touched by the mania for speculation then rife, and preferred to sink his money in the great "South Sea Bubble." Gay had been presented by a friend (Secretary Craggs) with some South Sea Stock, and was tempted to invest his thousand pounds, and to believe himself in consequence to be master of a fortune of some twenty thousand pounds. His friends endeavoured to persuade him to sell his share, or at least so much as would enable him to purchase an annuity for life of a hundred a year, "which," said Elijah Fenton, "will made you sure of a clean shirt and a shoulder of mutton every day." But Gay was obdurate; he invested all his money, lost every penny, and sunk so low in consequence that for a time both his life and reason were despaired of. However, his friends rallied around him, Pope especially, and his health and spirits were soon restored. In an "Epistle" to Mr. Thomas Snow he has happily ridiculed his own folly in trusting to visionary schemes, and in disregarding the advice of his more wordly-wise friends:—

"O thou whose penetrative wisdom found
 The South-Sea rocks and shelves, where thousands drown'd;
 When credit sunk, and commerce gasping lay,
 Thou stood'st, nor sent'st one bill unpaid away.
 When not a guinea chink'd on Martin's boards,
 And Atwell's self was drain'd of all his hoards,
 Thou stood'st an Indian King in size and hue;
 Thy unexhausted shop was our Peru.
 Why did Change-Alley waste thy precious hours
 Among the fools who gap'd for golden flowers?
 No wonder if we found some poets there,
 Who live on fancy, and can feed on air;
 No wonder they were caught by South-Sea schemes,
 Who ne'er enjoy'd a guinea but in dreams;
 No wonder, that their third subscriptions sold
 For millions of imaginary gold;
 No wonder that their fancies wild can frame
 Strange reasons, that a thing is still the same,
 Though chang'd throughout in substance and in name."

Gay next published "Dione: a Pastoral Tragedy," which was included by him in his collected works previously noted (1720). "This," says Dr. Johnson, "is a counterpart of 'Amynta' and 'Pastor Fido,' and other trifles of the kind, easily imitated, and unworthy of imitation. What the Italians call comedies, from a happy conclusion, Gay calls a tragedy, from a mournful event; but the style of the Italians and of Gay is equally tragical. There is something in the poetical *Arcadia* so remote from known reality and speculative possibility, that we can never support its representation through a long work. A pastoral of a hundred lines may be endured; but who will hear of sheep and goats, and myrtle bowers and purling rivulets through five acts?"

Several years appear to have elapsed before Gay essayed any further literary venture, for his next play, "The Captives," did not appear until 1724, when, like several of his previous works, it was brought out at Drury Lane. An amusing anecdote is told relative to this play. Mr. Gay had interest enough with the Princess of Wales (afterwards Queen Caroline) to excite the interest of Her Royal Highness in the new piece, and the author was commanded to read the play before the Court at Leicester House. The day was fixed, and Mr. Gay was in attendance. He waited some time in an ante-chamber, with the play in his hand, but being a very nervous and modest man, he appears to have lost his presence of mind, for when the door was opened into the drawing room, where the Princess and her ladies were seated, he was so much confused about his carriage and the necessity of making his proper obeisance, that he stumbled over a footstool and fell forwards against a heavy screen, which he knocked down, thus making his appearance at Court in a very undignified manner. Of course the ladies screamed, and of course a good deal of confusion ensued; but in the end poor Gay was able to read his play. On this story Hawkesworth has founded an amusing tale in the "Adventure," and it may possibly have originated another humorous piece, well known to modern reciters, entitled, "The Bashful Man." The play, however, had but little

success, and again for a time Gay seems to have desisted from his literary labours.

In 1723, as he himself states in a letter to Swift, he was appointed Commissioner of the State Lottery, which he calculated would be worth to him about a hundred and fifty pounds. He hoped, moreover, that it would have brought him further profit; but after holding the position for about two years, he lost his place, presumably on account of his intimacy with Bolingbroke, Swift, and Pulteney, and from a prejudice that Sir Robert Walpole had against him.

He, however, retained the favour of the Princess, and at her request wrote his first series of those "Fables" which form the substance of this volume, and which have retained their popularity undiminished to the present time. They are, as will be seen, dedicated to the son of the Princess of Wales, William, the young Duke of Cumberland, and were first published in 1726.

These Fables have been very much criticised, but on the whole they have passed through the ordeal fairly well, and have given pleasure to many generations of readers, besides enriching our language with several well known proverbial sayings. Of these, the most familiar are "When a lady's in the case," and "Two of a trade can never agree." The test of their popularity may be found in the numerous editions that have appeared, and the fact that they have been translated into most of the European languages, and are used in India as a school-book, having been translated into several dialects of that country. We have been informed by one publisher¹ that eight different editions have been issued from his house, with an aggregate of no less than 28,000 copies. The latest edition was edited by Mr. Austin Dobson with a brief but critical memoir. They have also furnished material for some of the most skilful book-illustrations, prominent amongst which may be mentioned the editions containing Bewick's admirable sketches, and the sumptuous edition of Stockdale (1793), which contains seventy illustrations by William Blake and others.

¹ Messrs. Longmans.

As a writer of Fables Gay stands pre-eminent amongst English writers, as in all the history of literature only four names deserve special notice besides Gay; these are Æsop, Phædrus, Pilpay, and La Fontaine: and only two of these wrote in verse.

Gay wrote a second series of Fables, which were published after his death, in 1738; but, whereas the first series consisted of fifty fables, the second was only sixteen, one, "Ay and No," being subsequently added in later editions. Some interesting correspondence took place relative to these Fables between Gay and Swift, from which we make the following extracts:—

In 1732, Gay wrote: "You seemed not to approve of my writing more Fables. Those I am now writing have a prefatory discourse before each of them by way of epistles and the morals of them; most are of a political kind, which makes them run into a greater length than those I have already published. Though this is a kind of writing that appears very easy, I find it the most difficult of any that I ever undertook; after I have invented one fable and finished it, I despair of finding out another; but I have a moral or two which I wish to write upon."

At another time he wrote: "I have almost done everything I proposed in the way of fables. I have not set the last hand to them. Though they will not amount to half the number, I believe they will make much such another volume as the last. I find it the most difficult task I ever undertook, but have determined to go through with it; and, after this, I believe I shall never have courage enough to think any more in this way."

Swift, to whom these letters were addressed, had himself vainly attempted to write fables, for he writes to Gay (Dublin, July 10th, 1732): "I am glad you determine upon something; there is no writing I esteem more than fables, nor anything so difficult to succeed in: which, however, you have done excellently well, and I have often admired your happiness in such performances, which I have frequently endeavoured at in vain. I remember I acted as you seem to hint: I found a moral first and studied for a fable, but could do nothing that pleased me,

and so left off that scheme for ever. I remember one, which was to represent what scoundrels rise in armies by a long war; wherein I supposed the lion engaged, and, having lost all his animals of worth, at last Sergeant Hog came to be a Brigadier, and Corporal Ass a Colonel, &c."

Of Gay's Fables it may be said that they contain more originality of invention than those of either Phædrus or La Fontaine, although they do not possess the elegant brevity of the one, or the captivating *naïveté* of the other; but, whereas their stories were mostly taken from preceding authors, Gay's are, with few exceptions, entirely original. His language is a model for this species of composition; seldom above or below the subject: it is poetical without being too elevated: and familiar without being low.

Hazlitt says: "'Gay's Fables' are certainly a work of great merit, both as to the quantity of invention implied, and as to the elegance and facility of the execution."

Gay seems to have been the sport of adverse fate, for on the accession of George II., he was fully persuaded that his longed-for promotion would at last be realized, and that he would obtain some lucrative appointment at Court, as he was already in favour with the Royal Family. His hopes were strengthened, too, by a remark of the Queen to Mrs. Howard, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, in allusion to his Fable of the Hare and many Friends, that she herself would take up the Hare; Her Majesty enjoining Mrs. Howard to remind her, on settling the various appointments about her person, to find some fitting employment for Mr. Gay. He was therefore offered the position of Gentleman Usher to the Princess Louise, a girl of two years old, with a stipend of two hundred a year. Gay indignantly rejected this offer, treating it as an insult. He writes to Swift:—

"But why should I tell you what you know already? The Queen's family is at last settled; and in the list I was appointed Gentleman Usher to the Princess Louise, the youngest Princess; which, upon account that I am so far advanced in life, I have declined accepting; and I have endeavoured in the best manner I could, to make my excuses to Her Majesty. So now all my expectations are

vanished; and I have no prospect but in depending wholly upon myself and my own conduct. As I am used to disappointments I can bear them; but as I can have no more hopes, I can no more be disappointed; so that I am in a blessed condition." Swift alludes to this in his libel on Dr. Delany and Lord Carteret:—

"Thus Gay, the Hare with many Friends,
Twice sev'n long years the *Court* attends,
Who under tales conveying truth,
To virtue form'd a princely youth:
Who paid his courtship with the crowd,
As far as modest pride allow'd;
Rejects a servile Usher's place,
And leaves St. James's in disgrace."

To Gay himself, Swift writes on the same incident:

"How could you, Gay, disgrace the muse's strain,
To serve a tasteless court twelve years in vain!
Fain would I think our female¹ friend sincere,
Till Bob, the poet's foe,² possess her ear;
Did female virtue e'er so high ascend,
To lose an inch of favour for a friend?
Say, had the court no better place to chuse
For thee, than make a dry nurse of thy muse?
How cheaply had thy liberty been sold,
To squire a royal girl of two years old,
In leading strings her infant steps to guide,
Or with her go cart amble side by side!"

The wisdom of his rejection of this appointment is doubtful, as it is more than probable that the post was a sinecure, and given him, in order that he might enjoy the emoluments without being called upon to discharge any arduous duties.

Very shortly after the publication of the "Fables," Gay contemplated another work on which his fame chiefly rests. This was the "Beggars Opera," first performed at Lincoln's Inn Theatre on January 29th, 1728. The great success of this piece, which carried it through a run of sixty-three nights during its first season, and the frequent repetitions of it since, have rendered its merits generally known, but it may not be out of place to enter briefly into a detail of the causes which led to its remarkable popularity. The origin of

¹ Mrs. Howard.

² Sir Robert Walpole.

the "Beggar's Opera" was, according to Pope, somewhat as follows:—

"Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay what an odd pretty sort of thing a Newgate pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing for some time; but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to the 'Beggar's Opera.' He began on it; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project."

The opera, as originally written, had no proper Prologue, but there was an introductory scene between a beggar and a player, in which the former owns himself to be the author, and after giving some details of the piece, goes on to say:—"I hope I may be forgiven that I have not made my opera throughout unnatural, like those in vogue: for I have no recitative; excepting this, as I have consented to have neither Prologue nor Epilogue, it must be allowed an Opera in all its forms." It was, therefore, called the "Beggar's Opera," as having been apparently written by one of that fraternity. *Beggars' Opera*, as it is sometimes printed, *quasi*, an opera by or relating to beggars, is therefore erroneous.

Dr. Johnson states that the "Beggar's Opera" was written in ridicule of the musical Italian Drama; and this is the general opinion of other writers, and it is pretty certain that it had the effect of arresting the success of the Italian Opera for a considerable time. Both Pope and Swift assisted Gay in the preparation of the Opera, both with advice and literary help, but it is a singular thing that neither of them believed in the ultimate success of the work as a stage performance. According to a writer in the *Mirror* (xi. 64), many of the pieces were written or altered by Pope, "whose wit ignited into a fiercer fire." The song of Peachum, the thief-taker, as written by Gay, was less severe, until Pope altered the last two lines:—

"The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,
The lawyer be-knaves the divine;
And the statesman, because he's so great,
Thinks his trade is as honest as mine."

These stood in Gay's manuscript:—

“And there's many arrive to be great,
By a trade not more honest as mine.”

Again, Pope wrote the still more audacious verses in the song of Macheath, after his being taken:—

“Since laws were made for every degree,
To curb vice in others as well as in me,
I wonder we hadn't better company
Upon Tyburn tree.”

The play was at first offered to Colley Cibber, for Drury Lane Theatre, but rejected. It was accepted by Rich, and by him produced at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre in November, 1727. Although at first it seemed doubtful of success, as it proceeded all doubts were removed, and at its termination the applause was vehement and long sustained. Cibber, although he did not acknowledge that he had been in error in rejecting the piece, spoke of it in gratifying terms, and he wrote, “In his ‘Beggars Opera’ he had more skilfully gratify'd the Publick taste than all the brightest authors that ever went before him,” which was high praise from a rival manager. It soon became the fashion; its fame rapidly spread to the provinces, and its popularity has not even now died out, for it was performed in London, at the Avenue Theatre, as recently as November, 1886, when Mr. Sims Reeves took the character of Macheath, and Miss Phillipine Siedle that of Polly Peachum.

Were we writing a history of this play, we could give many other interesting facts and figures relative to it; but we must needs forbear, attractive though the subject may be. One or two incidents must therefore suffice for our present purpose. It is not often that a player forgets his or her part after many repetitions of a piece, but this did actually occur during the fifty-third night of the performance, of the “Beggars Opera.” One of the players was reproved by Rich, the manager, for having forgotten his part. “Well, really,” returned the actor, “one cannot remember the thing for ever.”

The Rev. George Gilfillan, in his “Life of Gay,” speaking

of the "Beggar's Opera," says: "On its first night there was a brilliant assemblage. What painter shall give their heads and faces on that anxious evening? Swift's lowering front; Pope's bright eyes, contrasting with the blind orbs of Congreve (if *he*, indeed, were there), Addison's quiet, thoughtful physiognomy, as of one retired into some 'Vision of Mirza'; the Duke of Argyll, with his star and stately form and animated countenance; and poor Gay himself, perhaps, like some other playwrights in the same predicament, perspiring with trepidation, as if again about to recite the 'Captives!' At first uncertainty prevails among the patron-critics, and strange looks are exchanged between Swift and Pope, till, by-and-by, the latter hears Argyll exclaim, 'It will do—it must do! I see it in the eyes of 'em!' and then the critics breathe freely, and the applause becomes incontrollable, and the curtain closes at last amidst thunders of applause; and Gay goes home triumphant, amidst a circle of friends, who do not know whether more to wonder at his success or at their own previous apprehensions."

The financial result of this venture seems to have been as satisfactory as its dramatic success, for it was declared by a wit of the period to have made "Gay *rich* and *Rich* gay." The total sum realized by the thirty-two successive performances was £5,351 15s., of which Gay's share was £693 13s. 6d. It is probable that the author realized over one thousand pounds by the various performances during its first run on the stage.

As to the moral effect of the play, opinion was divided. Dr. Swift approved of it, but many of the clergy censured it. The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Herring) preached a sermon before the Court, in which he pointed out its pernicious tendency to destroy morality in the lower classes of the community. Johnson also thought that it might have some influence by making the character of a rogue familiar, and in some degree pleasing. Gay's intention was, however, rather to satirise the vices of the great than to popularise vice, and his shafts were particularly levelled at Sir R. Walpole, who had fallen under the displeasure of the poet and his friends.

In 1729, Gay brought out "Polly," a second part of the "Beggar's Opera," but, when on the point of bringing it forward at Covent Garden, a message was received from the Lord Chamberlain prohibiting its performance, and commanding that the play should be suppressed. Although it could not be performed, it was published, and its production turned out very advantageous to Gay, for the subscriptions he received from persons of quality and others were so numerous and liberal that he is believed to have made more than four times as much by the publication than he could have reasonably hoped to clear by a tolerable run on the stage. An altered version of "Polly" was brought out at the Haymarket Theatre in 1777, by Mr. Colman, but after a few night's representation it sank into its former obscurity, and never revived again. It is singular to note that the Duchess of Queensberry—Gay's old patron—was present at this performance, although then extremely old.

Gay's next work was an English pastoral opera, entitled "Acis and Galatea," in three acts. It is a recitative and air, the story taken from the 13th Book of Ovid's "Metamorphoses." It was set to music by Handel, and first performed at the Haymarket Theatre in 1732. This work is still very popular, although the name of the poet has almost been lost sight of in the greater fame of the musician.

"Achilles," an opera, appeared in 1732, being performed at Covent Garden. This piece, which is in the manner of the "Beggar's Opera," is a ludicrous relation of the discovery of Achilles by Ulysses. The scene is laid in the Court of Lycomedes. Achilles is in woman's clothes through the whole play, and it concludes with his marriage to Deidamia. It gave rise to two or three squibs, one of which was "Achilles dissected," being a complete key to the political characters in Mr. Gay's work; another, by George Colman, was an altered version of Gay's "Achilles," brought out under the title, "Achilles in Petticoats." It met with little success.

Two other works written by Gay were not published until after his death. These were "The Distress'd Wife : a

Comedy," and "The Rehearsal at Goatham." The former was published in 1743; the latter in 1754. Neither of these plays was considered equal to the generality of Gay's earlier writings, and in no sense added to his fame. Gay wrote many other pieces than those we have enumerated in the preceding pages; they are classed in his collected works as Epistles, Tales, Eclogues, Songs and Ballads, Elegies, etc., etc.

We have already mentioned some of the epistles; the tales are few and of no great merit; the town eclogues are chiefly a display of the scandal-mongering of the time, and require nothing more than this passing note. The songs and ballads are of much more importance, as some, at least, of them rank high amongst English lyrical productions. There are contained in the various operas written by Gay nearly two hundred songs and ballads, many of which are still popular, and are often sung independently of the works in which they originally appeared. Two of the most celebrated songs are "All in the Downs," or, as it is more frequently entitled, "Black-eyed Susan," and "'Twas when the Seas were Roaring." The former has often been pirated and paraphrased by unscrupulous people who gave Gay little credit for his production.

A very interesting incident is narrated by Mr. J. R. Chanter, in a paper contributed to a west of England journal,¹ which we cannot refrain from quoting:—"An interesting local incident as to these ballads occurred in this town (Barnstaple) half a century after Gay's decease. Inledon, the celebrated vocalist, during a professional tour in the West in his palmy days, visited Barnstaple, as a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Gay; and on being shown the house in which the poet had passed his early days, astonished and delighted the neighbours by breaking out into song in the open street in front of the house, and, in the stillness of a bright moonlight evening, warbled several of his ballads and songs, as a tribute to Gay's memory. (I had this from an ancient inhabitant, an eye-witness of the scene.)" Dr. Brushfield, in another article in the same journal, mentions another anecdote

¹ *Western Antiquary.*

relative to Gay and his ballads. The incident is quoted from *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* of August 21st, 1817:—

“Gay wrote his well known ballad of ‘Black-eyed Susan’ upon Mrs. Montford, a celebrated actress, contemporary with Cibber. After her retirement from the stage, love and the ingratitude of a bosom friend, deprived her of her senses, and she was placed in a receptacle for lunatics. During a lucid interval, she asked her attendant what play was to be performed that evening, and was told, Hamlet. In this tragedy, whilst on the stage, she had ever been received with rapture as Ophelia. The recollection struck her, and with that cunning which is so often allied to insanity, she eluded the care of her keepers, and got to the theatre, where she concealed herself until the scene in which Ophelia enters in her insane state; she then pushed on the stage before the lady who had performed the previous part of the character could come on, and exhibited a more perfect representation of madness than the utmost exertions of the mimic art could effect; she was in truth Ophelia herself, to the amazement of the performers and the astonishment of the audience. Nature having made this last effort, her vital powers failed her. On going off, she exclaimed: ‘It is all over.’ She was immediately conveyed back to her late place of security, and a few days after:—

‘Like a lily drooping, she hung her head and died.’

Gay wrote another capital ballad on “Ale,” which was not included in the earlier editions of his works. In it he sings the praises of “Nappy Ale,” a beverage well-known and highly appreciated in his native Devon. Another well known ballad was entitled “Molly Mog; or, the Fair Maid of the Inn”; this was written on an innkeeper’s daughter at Oakingham, in Berkshire, who in her youth was a celebrated beauty and toast; she lived to a very advanced age, and until the month of March, 1766. From this it will be seen that Gay had the musical faculty as well as the poetical, for his songs are all melodious and adapted for music. It is generally believed that when a youth he not only sang, but played well upon the flute. One

interesting feature in his works (to which we have already made passing allusion) is the number of proverbial lines and couplets scattered through them which have become stock phrases and are part and parcel of our every-day language.

"Dearest friends must part."

"While there's life there's hope."

"Two of a trade can never agree."

"When a lady's in the case,
You know all other things give place."

"Those who in quarrels interpose
Must often wipe a bloody nose."

"How happy could I be with either
Were t'other dear charmer away."

Gay, in one of his many letters to Dr. Swift, gives a humorous receipt for stewing veal, which he says was intended for Monsieur Davaux, Mr. Pulteney's cook. The lines are as follows:—

"Take a knuckle of veal ;
You may buy it, or steal.
In a few pieces cut it :
In a stewing-pan put it.
Salt, pepper, and mace
Must season this knuckle ;
Then ¹ what's pin'd to a place,
With other herbs muckle ;
That which killed King ² Will :
And what never ³ stands still.
Some ⁴ sprigs of that bed
Where children are bred,
Which much you will mend, if
Both spinnage and endive,
And lettice, and beet,
With marygold meet.
Put no water at all ;
For it maketh things small,
Which, lest it should happen,
A close cover clap on.
Put this pot of ⁵ Wood's mettle
In a hot, boiling kettle,
And here let it be
(Mark the doctrine I teach)
About—let me see,—
Thrice as long as you preach ⁶ ;

¹ Vulgo, salary ; *i e.*, celery.

² Supposed sorrel.

³ This is by *Dr. Bentley* thought to be time, or thyme.

⁴ Parsley. Vide *Chamberlayne*.

⁵ Copper

⁶ Which we suppose to be near four hours.

So, skimming the fat off,
Say grace with your hat off.
O, then, with what rapture
Will it fill dean and chapter !

Several pieces are included in later editions of Gay's works which were not published during his lifetime, and not included in the earlier editions of his collected poems. One of these is "Gondibert," a poem (continued from Sir William Davenant). There does not appear to be any definite authority for including this amongst the poems of Gay ; and the same may be said of others which we need not here enumerate. Gay had many imitators : one of these was Captain John Durant Breval, who published several works under the assumed name of "Joseph Gay," or "Mr. Gay," only. "The Petticoat" was one of these, published in 1716, which looks like an imitation of Gay's "Fan." Another, "The Confederates," hits a sideblow at "Three Hours after Marriage," in which it may be remembered that Gay was associated with Pope and Arbuthnot. The publication of this work so offended Pope that he introduced "Breval" into the "Dunciad" (Book II., 126).

We have now to speak of a most interesting and curious little volume, published in 1820, entitled "Gay's Chair," being poems never before printed, written by Gay, with a sketch of his life, from MSS. left by the Rev. Joseph Baller, his nephew. In the preface to this volume are some interesting particulars, which we think are worthy of being incorporated in this biography of the poet. "Many of the most respectable inhabitants of Barnstaple and its vicinity remember having often seen this chair, several years ago, while it was in the possession of Gay's immediate descendants, who always spoke of it as having been the property of the poet, and which, as his favourite easy chair, he highly valued. Its identity cannot well be mistaken, from the peculiarity of its shape, its antique appearance, and curious construction ; forming, with its conveniently attached apparatus for writing and reading, a complete student's chair.

"About twelve years since, it was sold amongst some of

the effects of the late Mrs. Williams, niece of the Rev. Joseph Baller, and who by a previous marriage had been the wife of the Rev. Hugh Fortescue, of Filleigh, near Barnstaple. Both families (the Fortescues and the Ballers) were by marriage nearly related to Gay, whose property was, at his decease (as will afterwards be shown), equally divided betwixt his sisters, Katherine Baller and Joanna Fortescue.

"Since the period of Mrs. Williams' death, the chair came into the hands of the late Mr. Clarke, of High Street, Barnstaple, and it was sold, with the rest of his household furniture, by public auction. The editor (Henry Lee) happening to be then in Devonshire, heard of the above circumstance, and anxious to ascertain the particulars, applied to the auctioneer, who informed him that the chair had been sold to a person of the name of Symonds, to whom the editor immediately went, saw the chair, and afterwards purchased it: orders were given that it should be sent to the house of Mr. Crook, a cabinet maker in the same street, to be repaired; who on removing the drawers, discovered the manuscripts from which the principal articles of this publication are taken.

"The following extract from Mr. Crook's letter to a gentleman who made inquiries on the subject, will, it is presumed, be satisfactory—'The chair was bought at an auction by Mr. Symonds, of this town, from whose house it came to mine. I was desired to repair it, and on taking out the draw in front, which was somewhat broken, I found at the back part of the chair, a *concealed drawer*, ingeniously fastened with a small wooden bolt. Those who have lately had possession of the chair never knew of this concealed drawer: it was full of manuscript papers, some of which appeared to have slipped over, as I found them stuck in the bottom or seat of the chair. A respectable tradesman of this town was present when I made the discovery. The owner of the chair was immediately sent for, and the whole of the papers safely delivered into his hands. I am, Sir, your humble servant,

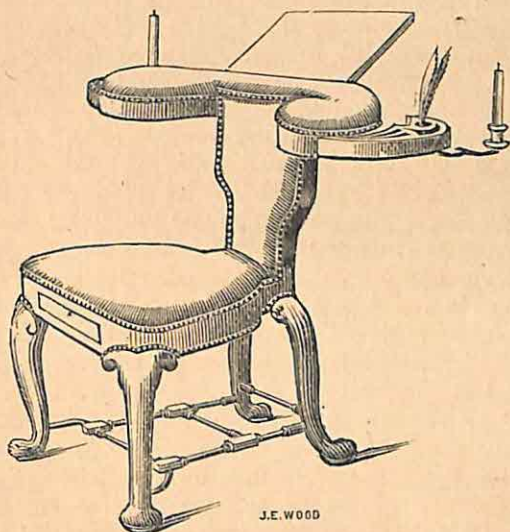
"RICHARD CROOK,

"March 21st, 1819.

Cabinet Maker, Barnstaple."

"That the chair originally belonged to Gay there is not the least doubt; the fact is admitted by all the best informed persons in the neighbourhood who have paid any attention to the subject."

The editor then cites the authority of several persons as to the authenticity of the chair, and concludes with the following paragraph: "Amongst the documents and



relics of Gay and his family, which the editor has become possessed of (and which may, at some future time, be more particularly noticed), is a small, curiously carved wooden box, of about five inches diameter; when opened, there appears in the centre a compartment secured by a screw lid, round which is a depository for cash—it is said to have been Gay's money-box. A poet's money-box may, perhaps, be considered a great curiosity, but the reader will not be surprised when he is informed that it was found—empty!"

The volume contains the following pieces by Gay, which,

it is believed, have never been before printed, and are certainly in his well known style :—

1. "The Ladies' Petition to the Honourable the House of Commons, commencing, 'We, the Maids of Exon City.'" 2. "To Miss Jane Scott." 3. "Prediction." 4. "Comparisons." 5. "Absence." 6. "Fable." 7. "Congratulations to a Newly Married Pair." 8. "A Devonshire Hill." 9. "Letter to a Young Lady." 10. "To my Chair."

The cut on the preceding page is a fair representation of this curious and useful chair, and it will doubtless commend itself in shape and convenience to other *literati*.

Gay's death took place on December 4th, 1732, at the residence of the Duke of Queensberry, in Burlington Gardens, near Piccadilly. His Grace had latterly taken the entire control of Gay and his affairs, treating him as a privileged guest, managing his monetary affairs, and doing all in his power to render his life bearable. But Gay still suffered from his early disappointments at Court, and consequently his last days were gloomy and overshadowed. His state at this time may best be gathered from a few extracts from his correspondence, much of which has been preserved. Writing to Pope, he says :— "My melancholy increases, and every hour threatens me with some return of my distemper; nay, I may rather say I have it on me. Not the divine books, the kind favours and expressions of the divine Duchess (who hereafter shall be in place of a Queen to me; nay, she shall be my Queen), nor the inexpressible goodness of the Duke, can in the least cheer me. The drawing room no more receives light from these two stars. There is now (what Milton says in Hell) darkness visible. O that I had never known what a Court was! Dear Pope, what a barren soil (to me so) have I been striving to produce something out of! Why did I not take your advice before my writing fables for the Duke not to write them, or rather to write them for some young nobleman? It is my hard fate. I must get nothing, write for them or against them."

On October 7th, 1732, he writes to Pope :—"I am at

last returned from my Somersetshire expedition, but since my return I cannot boast of my health as I could before I went, for I am frequently out of order with my colical complaint, so as to make me uneasy and dispirited, though not to any violent degree.

"All this journey I performed on horseback, and am very much disappointed that at present I feel myself so little the better for it. I have, indeed, followed riding and exercise for three months successively, and really think I was as well without it; so that I begin to feel the illness I have so long and so often complained of is inherent in my constitution, and that I have nothing for it but patience."

On another occasion, he writes:—

"I find myself in such a strange confusion and dejection of spirits, that I have not strength enough to make my will, though I perceive, by many warnings, I have no continuing city here. I begin to look upon myself as one already dead, and desire, my dear Mr. Pope, whom I love as my own soul, if you survive me, as you certainly will, if a stone should mark the place of my grave, see these words put upon it:—

"Life is a jest, and all things show it,
I thought so once, but now I know it,"

with what you may think proper. If anybody should ask, how I could communicate this after death? let it be known it is not meant so, but my present sentiments in life."

In this uncertain state of health he set about preparing his opera of "Achilles" for the stage, but caught a fever which carried him off in less than three days.

We shall now see how Gay's death affected his most intimate friends. Pope, in a letter to Swift, dated December 8th, 1732, says:—

"It is not a time to complain that you have not answered my two letters. It is now indeed a time to think of myself, when one of the nearest and longest ties I ever had is broken of a sudden, by the unexpected

death of poor Mr. Gay. An inflammatory fever hurried him out of life in less than three days; he died last night at nine o'clock, not deprived of his senses entirely at last, and possessing them perfectly till within five hours. He asked of you a few hours before, when in acute torment by an inflammation in his bowels and breast.

"Good God! how often are we to die before we quit this stage? In every friend we lose a part of ourselves, and the best part. God bless those we have left."

Dr. Arbuthnot wrote to Swift on January 13th, 1733: "We have all had another loss of our worthy and dear friend, Mr. Gay. It was some alleviation of my grief to see him so universally lamented by almost everybody, even by those who knew him only by reputation. He was interred at Westminster Abbey as if he had been a peer of the realm, and the good Duke of Queensberry, who lamented him as a brother, will set up a handsome monument upon him."

In another letter from Pope to Swift, we read: "It is, indeed, impossible to speak on such a subject as the loss of Mr. Gay—to me an irreparable one. You say truly that death is only terrible as it separates us from those we love; but I really think those have the worst of it who are left by us, if we are true friends. I have felt more, I fancy, in the loss of Mr. Gay than I shall suffer in the thought of going away myself into a state that can feel none of its losses.

"I wished vehemently to have seen him in a condition of living independent, and to have lived in perfect indolence the rest of our days together—the two most idle, most innocent, undesigning poets of our age."

Gay's friend and patron, the Duchess of Queensberry, wrote to Swift: "Soon after the death of our friend, Mr. Gay, I found myself more inclined to write to you than to allow myself any other entertainment. If I have any good in me, I certainly learned it insensibly of our poor friend, as children do any strange language. It is not possible to imagine the loss his death is to me; but as long as I have any memory, the happiness of ever having had such a friend can never be lost to me."

And again she writes: "Whilst I had that very sincere good friend, I could sometimes lay open all my rambling thoughts, and he and I would often view and dissect them; but now they come and go, and I seldom find out whether they be right or wrong, or if there be anything in them. Poor man! he was most truly everything you could say of him."

Swift's letter to the Duchess, written from Ireland, was couched in the following terms: "The greatest unhappiness of my life is grown a comfort under the death of my friend. I mean my banishment in this miserable country; for the distance I am at, and the despair I have of ever seeing my friends further than by a summer visit; and this, so late in my life, so uncertain in my health, and so embroiled in my affairs, may probably never happen, so that my loss is not so great as that of his other friends, who had it in their power to converse with him. But I chiefly lament your Grace's misfortune, because I greatly fear, with all the perfections which can possibly acquire veneration to a mortal creature from the worthiest of human kind, you will never be able to procure another so useful, so sincere, so virtuous, so disinterested, so entertaining, so easy, and so humble a friend as that person whose death all good men lament."

One of the most beautiful and touching tributes ever paid to the memory of a brother poet was that written by Pope on Gay:—

"Blest be the *great*! for those they take away,
And those they left me, for they left me Gay;
Left me to see neglected genius bloom,
Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb:
Of all thy blameless life the sole return,
My verse, and Queens'b'ry weeping o'er his urn."¹

As Gay never married and left no will, his two sisters, Catherine Baller and Joanna Fortescue, became entitled to his property, which amounted to about £6,000. On January 2nd, 1733, Letters of Administration were granted to them; and they further obtained a large sum of money from a suit in Chancery which Gay had instituted, some

¹ Pope's Prologue, to the "Satires"

months before his death, against some printers and booksellers who had published various editions of his "Polly" without his consent. Some years afterwards, the sisters also received the profits of a benefit from one of the theatres.

Gay, as we have seen, was buried in Westminster Abbey amongst England's most illustrious dead.

"His body was brought, by the company of Upholders, from the Duke of Queensberry's to Exeter 'Change in the Strand, and on the 23rd of December, after lying in very decent State, was, at Eight of the clock in the Evening, drawn in a Hearse, trimmed with Plumes of Black and White Feathers, attended with three mourning Coaches and six Horses, to Westminster Abbey. His Pall was supported by the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Chesterfield, the Lord Viscount Cornbury; the Hon. Mr. Berkeley; General Dormer; Mr. Gore; and Mr. Pope. The last offices were performed by the Rt. Rev. Dr. Wilcox, Bishop of Rochester, the Choir attending; and his Remains were deposited in the South-Cross-Isle, over against Chaucer's Tomb."¹

A monument was erected to his memory by his noble patrons, the sculptor being the famous Mr. Rysbrack. It bears the following glowing eulogium, penned by Mr. Pope:—

"Of manners gentle, of Affections mild,
In Wit a Man, Simplicity, a Child;
With native Humour, temp'ring virtuous Rage,
Form'd to delight at once and lash the Age.
Above Temptation in a low Estate,
And uncorrupted, e'en among the great.
A safe Companion, and an easy Friend,
Unblam'd thro' Life, lamented in thy End.
These are thy Honours! Not that here thy Bust,
Is mix'd with Heroes, or with Kings thy Dust:
But that the Worthy and the Good shall say,
Striking their pensive Bosoms,—here lies Gay."

Passing from the laudations of his most intimate friends, we might cite many interesting passages from the writings of his various biographies from Curl to Dobson. A few of these, however, must suffice. Dr. R. Carruthers,

¹ Life of Gay, 1733.

writing in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Edition), says:—"It may be safely said that no man could have acquired such a body of great and accomplished friends as those which rallied round Gay and mourned his loss, without the possession of many valuable and endearing qualities. His poetry is neither high nor pure; but he had humour, a fine vein of fancy, and powers of observation and local painting which bespeak the close poetical student and the happy literary artist." The Rev. George Gilfillan sums up his opinion of Gay in the following pithy paragraph:—

"John Gay had his faults as a man and as a poet, and it were easy finding fault with him in both capacities. But—

'Poor were the Triumph o'er the timid hare';

and he was, by his own showing, as well as Queen Caroline's, 'The Hare with many Friends.' Let us, instead, drop 'a tear over his fate,' and pay a tribute, short, but sincere, to his true, though limited genius." In the "Memoir" appended to previous editions of these "Fables," issued by the present publishers, and written by the Rev. O. F. Owen, we find the following record:—

"The great merit attached to Gay on the score of originality consists in his having been the first to bring out the ballad opera, and thereby to have hit the public taste by a species of composition appropriate, if not elevated. Indeed, the general character of his intellect, like that of his disposition, seems to have been of a moderate temper, in which correctness took the medium place between genius and tenuity. Pope describes him as a natural man, without design, who spoke what he thought, and just as he thought it; of a timid temper, and fearful of giving offence to the great, which latter habit, he says, 'was of no avail.' He might have added, neither will it ever succeed, since the world, to be managed properly, must, as Charles the Fifth observed, feel 'the iron hand in the silk glove.' In Gay, it is certain, we discover none of those faults which

——— 'Lofty genius owes
Half to the ardour which itself bestows.

His policy lay in the natural exercise of his disposition, which was so plastic as readily to succumb to others in contented servility."

And Austin Dobson, the latest of his biographers, has written:—"He was thoroughly kindly and affectionate, with just that touch of clinging in his nature, and of helplessness in his character, which, when it does not inspire contempt (and Gay's parts secured him from that) makes a man the spoiled child of men and the playfellow of women. He had his frailties, it is true; he was as indolent as Thomson; as fond of fine clothes as Goldsmith; as great a *gourmand* as La Fontaine. That he was also easily depressed and despondent was probably the result of his inactive life and his uncertain health. But, at his best, he must have been a delightfully equable and unobtrusive companion—invaluable for fêtes and gala days, and equally well adapted for the half-lights and unrestrained intercourse of familiar life."

Such are a few of the many appreciative notices of the subject of this brief memoir. Many more might be introduced, but as this sketch is simply intended to form an introduction to the volume of "Fables" now again offered to the discriminating public, we reluctantly forbear overburdening these pages. We trust ere long that an opportunity may occur for giving to the world a full and exhaustive Life of John Gay, fit to be placed side by side with those biographies of his contemporaries whose names have frequently appeared in the course of our essay. Devonshire men are proud of their native born poet; but even to them the incidents of his life and the merits of his writings are all too little known.

We have in the foregoing pages given a brief sketch of Gay's life and literary successes, with not a few failures. It only remains for us to make two or three general remarks upon his personal appearance and character. His social character may be judged from the extracts of his own letters and those of his friends Pope and Swift, from which we have freely drawn, and through which (as in a mirror) we seem to see the man himself and to become interested in everything that pertains to him. We cannot

help pitying him for the many and grievous disappointments which tended very much to embitter his life; and yet we find very few traits in his character which call for condemnation or even serious disapproval. As we have before remarked, Pope described him as "In wit, a man, simplicity, a child," and this character he retained to his latest years. "He was by turns thoughtless and over solicitous, careless and provident, playful and serious, timid before strangers, but volatile in the company of his acquaintance. Suddenly dejected and suddenly depressed; without guile himself and expecting none in others; confiding in promises; fearful of giving offence, yet frank and indiscreet in uttering his thoughts."

Several portraits of him are extant, from which we may judge his physiognomy to have been by no means remarkable; rather denoting benignity and meekness than strength or self-reliance.

He was inclined to corpulency, and this was still further increased by his indolent habits, which was the cause of much good-humoured raillery on the part of his friends. In his Epistle to Lord Burlington, describing his journey to Exeter, he says:—

"I journey far—you knew fat bards would tire,
And, mounted, sent me forth your trusty squire."

Swift, in a letter to the Duchess of Queensberry, writes:—"You need not be in pain about Mr. Gay's stock of health; I promise you he will spend it all upon laziness, and run deep in debt by a winter's repose in town; therefore, I entreat your Grace will order him to move his chaps less and his legs more, the six cold months, else he will spend all his money in physic and coach-hire."

On this, Pope, too, writes to him somewhat in the same strain:—"Fenton died at Easthampstead, of indolence and inactivity; let it not be your fate, but use exercise. I hope the Duchess will take care of you in this respect, and either make you gallop after her, or teize you enough at home to serve for exercise abroad."

Many other extracts might be given from the letters

of himself and his friends concerning this indolent habit of Gay's, but we hasten on to speak of his other weaknesses. He was, in his early life, fond of dress, although he has ridiculed this failing in his prologue to the "Shepherd's Week":—

"I sold my sheep and lambkins, too,
For silver loops and garments blue;
My boxen hautboy, sweet of sound,
For lace that edged mine hat around;
For Lightfoot and my scrip I got
A gorgeous sword and eke a knot."

In a letter to Swift, Pope also alluded to this failing of Gay's.—(*December 18th, 1713*):—

"One Mr. Gay, an unhappy youth, who writes pastorals during the time of divine service; whose case is the more deplorable as he hath miserably lavished away all that silver he should have reserved for his soul's health in buttons and loops for his coat."

Gay was of a roving disposition, and never happier than when he was rambling about from place to place in the train of some great nobleman or Court official.

He was indiscreet in many things, but he had an aversion to meanness. He hoped to gain favour at Court, but he never condescended to flatter either princes or their ministers, but rather to hold them up to ridicule. He was of an independent spirit, and could not bring himself to servile flattery even to gain his own advancement. In his "Epistle to Paul Methuen," he thus speaks with all the dignity of independence:—

"Why flourish'd verse in great Augustus's reign?
He and Mæcenæ lov'd the muse's strain.
But now that night in poverty must mourn,
Who was (O cruel stars!) a poet born.
Yet there are ways for authors to be great;
Write ranc'rous libels to reform the state:
Or, if you choose more sure and steady ways,
Spatter a minister with fulsome praise;
Launch out with freedom, flatter him enough,
Fear not,—all men are dedication proof.
Be bolder yet, you must go further still,
Dip deep in gall my mercenary quill.
He who his pen in party-quarrels draws,
Lifts an hir'd bravo to support the cause;

He must indulge his patron's hate and spleen,
 And stab the fame of those he ne'er had seen.
 Why then should authors mourn their desperate case?
 Be brave, do this, and then demand a place:
 Why art thou poor? exert the gifts to rise,
 And banish tim'rous virtue from thy eyes."

Gay's genius as a poet was certainly not of the highest order, but it was as certainly not of the lowest: although he did not excel in the higher flights of poetry, yet, as is proved in many of his poems, he was capable of uniting elevation of sentiment with dignity of language, and of describing natural beauties with the power of an artist.

Certain it is that in all his works he strove to give pleasure rather than to occasion surprise, and we may fairly say, in giving an estimate of his powers, that few poets have written with greater success on a variety of subjects than Gay. To him Tragedy, Comedy, Opera, Fable, Moral, Epic, Rustic, Town Eclogue, Pastoral, Poetic Epistle, and Ballad all came natural. To this extraordinary variety he alludes in the motto prefixed to his poems, with which we conclude our dissertation:—

"Hic jocamus, ludimus, amamus, dolemus, querimus, irascimur, describimus aliquid, modo pressius modo elatius; atque, ipsâ varietate tentamus efficere, ut alia aliis, quædam fortasse omnibus placeant."

¹ We jest, sport, love, weep, complain, are angry; we sometimes compress, at other times dilate the subject; and by means of this variety we attempt to effect that different parts may please different persons, and that some things may, perhaps, please all.



FABLES.

BY
JOHN GAY.



First Series.

INTRODUCTION.



SHEPHERD AND THE PHILOSOPHER.¹

REMOTE from cities lived a Swain,
Unvex'd with all the cares of gain ;
His head was silver'd o'er with age,
And long experience made him sage ;

¹ This introduction to the Fables is exceedingly beautiful, and contains a very useful moral:—that man in the most humble state may improve himself by due reflection and observation, even without the assistance of learning; and that a good and virtuous mind can draw a love of virtue and hatred to vice, from the most common objects of nature.

In summer's heat and winter's cold
 He fed his flock and penn'd the fold:
 His hours in cheerful labour flew,
 Nor envy nor ambition knew:
 His wisdom and his honest fame
 Through all the country raised his name.

A deep Philosopher (whose rules
 Of moral life were drawn from schools)
 The Shepherd's homely cottage sought,
 And thus explored his reach of thought:
 "Whence is thy learning? Hath thy toil
 O'er books consumed the midnight oil?¹
 Hast thou old Greece and Rome survey'd,
 And the vast sense of Plato weigh'd?
 Hath Socrates thy soul refined,
 And hast thou fathom'd Tully's mind?
 Or, like the wise Ulysses, thrown,
 By various fates, on realms unknown,
 Hast thou through many cities stray'd,
 Their customs, laws, and manners weigh'd?"

The Shepherd modestly replied,—
 "I ne'er the paths of learning tried;
 Nor have I roam'd in foreign parts
 To read mankind, their laws and arts;
 For man is practised in disguise,
 He cheats the most discerning eyes:
 Who by that search shall wiser grow,
 When we *ourselves* can never know?
 The little knowledge I have gain'd,
 Was all from simple Nature drain'd;

Gay in another work, also uses this expression:—

"Walkers at leisure, learning's flow'rs may spoil,
 Nor watch the *wasting of the midnight oil.*"
 —*Trivia*, Book II. 557-8.

Hence my life's maxims took their rise,
Hence grew my settled hate to vice.

“The daily labours of the bee
Awake my soul to industry.
Who can observe the careful ant
And not provide for future want?
My dog (the trustiest of his kind)

With gratitude inflames my mind:
I mark his true, his faithful way,
And in my service copy Tray.
In constancy and nuptial love,
I learn my duty from the dove.
The hen, who from the chilly air,
With pious wing, protects her care,
And every fowl that flies at large
Instructs me in a parent's charge.

“From Nature, too I take my rule,
To shun contempt and ridicule.
I never, with important air,
In conversation overbear.
Can grave and formal pass for wise,
When men the solemn owl despise?
My tongue within my lips I rein,
For who talks much, must talk in vain.
We from the wordy torrent fly;
Who listens to the chatt'ring pye?
Nor would I, with felonious sleight,
By stealth invade my neighbour's right.
Râpacious animals we hate:
Kites, hawks, and wolves, deserve their fate.
Do not we just abhorrence find
Against the toad and serpent kind?

But Envy, Calumny, and Spite,
Bear stronger venom in their bite.
Thus every object of creation
Can furnish hints to contemplation,
And from the most minute and mean,
A virtuous mind can morals glean."

"Thy fame is just," the Sage replies,
"Thy virtue proves thee truly wise.
Pride often guides the author's pen ;
Books as affected are as men :
But he who studies Nature's laws,
From certain truth his maxims draws ;
And those, without our schools, suffice
To make men moral, good, and wise."





FABLE I.

THE LION, THE TIGER, AND THE TRAVELLER.

ACCEPT, young Prince! the moral lay,
And in these Tales mankind survey;
With early virtues plant your breast,
The specious arts of vice detest.

Princes, like beauties, from their youth,
Are strangers to the voice of Truth.¹

¹ As Gay wrote these fables for the use of William, Duke of Cumberland, second son of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George II., by desire of Queen Caroline, he very properly inscribes them to the young prince and warns him against the seductions of flattery, the common vice of courts, and inculcates, from the example of the lion, compassion, mercy, and the love of justice: virtues congenial to noble and generous minds.

Learn to condemn all praise betimes,
 For flattery's the nurse of crimes;
 Friendship by sweet reproof is shown;
 (A virtue never near a throne;)
 In courts such freedom must offend;
 There, none presumes to be a friend.¹
 To those of your exalted station,
 Each courtier is a dedication.
 Must I, too, flatter like the rest,
 And turn my morals to a jest?
 The Muse disdains to steal from those
 Who thrive in courts by fulsome prose.

But shall I hide your real praise,
 Or tell you what a nation says?—
 They in your infant bosom trace
 The virtues of your royal race;
 In the fair dawning of your mind
 Discern you generous, mild, and kind;
 They see you grieve to hear distress,
 And pant already to redress.
 Go on, the height of good attain,
 Nor let a nation hope in vain:
 For hence we justly may presage
 The virtues of a riper age.
 True courage shall your bosom fire,
 And future actions own your sire.
 Cowards are cruel, but the brave
 Love mercy, and delight to save.²

8

¹ ——— "Nothing misbecomes
 The man that be thought a friend, like flattery."—*ROWE*.
Vide also Shakespeare, King Lear, Act iv. Sc. 6.—OWEN.

² The old habit is too strong for eradication; Gay falls into the language
 of courts, just after he had repudiated it.—*OWEN*.

A Tiger, roaming for his prey,
Sprung on a Traveller in the way;
The prostrate game a Lion spies,
And on the greedy tyrant flies:
With mingled roar resounds the wood,
Their teeth, their claws, distil with blood;
Till, vanquish'd by the Lion's strength,
The spotted foe extends his length.
The Man besought the shaggy lord,
And on his knees for life implored:
His life the generous hero gave.
Together walking to his cave,
The Lion thus bespoke his guest:

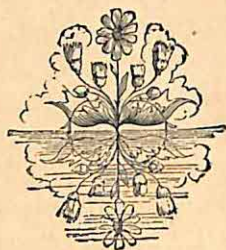
"What hardy beast shall dare contest
My matchless strength? you saw the fight,
And must attest my power and right.
Forced to forego their native home,
My starving slaves at distance roam.
Within these woods I reign alone;
The boundless forest is my own.
Bears, wolves, and all the savage brood
Have dyed the regal den with blood.
These carcasses on either hand,
Those bones that whiten all the land,
My former deeds and triumphs tell,
Beneath these jaws what numbers fell."

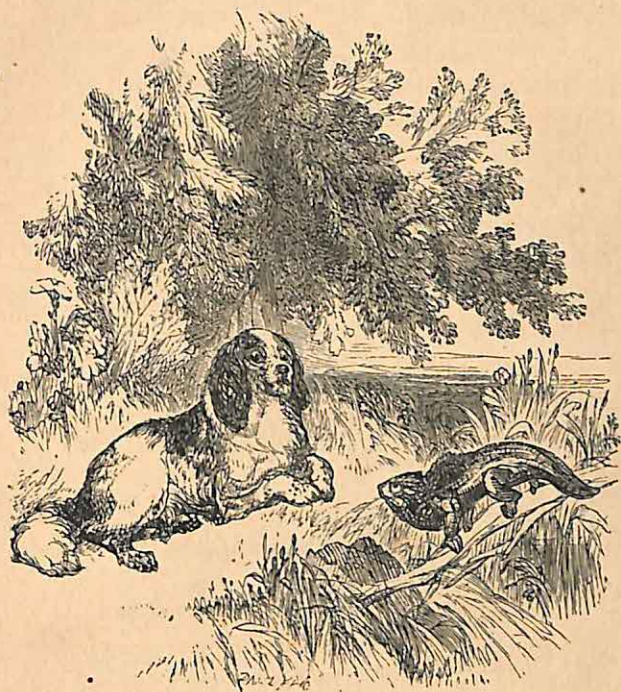
"True," says the man, "the strength I saw
Might well the brutal nation awe:
But shall a monarch, brave, like you,
Place glory in so false a view?
Robbers invade their neighbour's right:
Be loved: let justice bound your might.

Mean are ambitious heroes' boasts
Of wasted lands, and slaughter'd hosts:
Pirates their power by murders gain;
Wise kings by love and mercy reign.
To me your clemency hath shown
The virtue worthy of a throne.
Heav'n gives you power above the rest,
Like Heav'n, to succour the distrest."

"The case is plain," the Monarch said,
"False glory hath my youth misled;
For beasts of prey, a servile train,
Have been the flatterers of my reign.
You reason well. Yet tell me, friend,
Did ever you in courts attend?
For all my fawning rogues agree
That human heroes rule like me."¹

¹ *Vide Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice, Act iv. Sc. 1.*





FABLE II.

THE SPANIEL AND THE CHAMELEON.

A SPANIEL, bred with all the care
That waits upon a favourite heir,
Ne'er felt correction's rigid hand;
Indulged to disobey command,
In pamper'd ease his hours were spent;
He never knew what learning meant.

Such forward airs, so pert, so smart,
Were sure to win his lady's heart;
Each little mischief gain'd him praise.
How pretty were his fawning ways!

The wind was south, the morning fair,
He ventures forth to take the air;
He ranges all the meadow round,
And rolls upon the softest ground;
When near him a Chameleon seen,
Was scarce distinguish'd from the green.

"Dear emblem of the flattering host!
What, live with clowns! a genius lost!
To cities and the court repair;
A fortune cannot fail thee there:
Preferment shall thy talents crown;
Believe me, friend; I know the town."

"Sir," says the Sycophant, "like you,
Of old, politer life I knew;
Like you, a courtier born and bred,
Kings lean'd their ear to what I said:
My whisper always met success;
The ladies praised me for address;
I knew to hit each courtier's passion,
And flattered every vice in fashion;
But Jove, who hates the liar's ways,
At once cut short my prosp'rous days,
And, sentenced to retain my nature,
Transform'd me to this crawling creature.
Doom'd to a life obscure and mean,
I wander in the sylvan scene:
For Jove the heart alone regards;
He punishes what man rewards.

How different is thy case and mine?
With men at least you sup and dine;
While I, condemn'd to thinnest fare,
Like those I flatter'd, feed on air."¹

¹ The common tradition of the Chameleon living upon air is contrary to experience. The raillery at court sycophants naturally pervades Gay's writings, for he had suffered much from them: here, however, he intimates something more; namely, the opposite dispensations to men's acts, even in this world. The crafty is taken in his own gulf, the courtier falls by his own arts, and the ladder of ambition only prepares for the aspirant a further fall.





FABLE III.

THE MOTHER, THE NURSE, AND THE FAIRY.

"GIVE me a son!"—The blessing sent,
 Were ever parents more content?
 How partial are their doting eyes?
 No child is half so fair and wise.¹

¹ Montaigne says:—"I never yet saw that father who let his son be never so decrepit or scaldpated, would not own him; not but that, unless he were totally besotted and blinded with his paternal affection, he does not well enough discern his defects, but because, notwithstanding all his faults, he is still his."—OWEN.

Wak'd to the morning's pleasing care,
 The Mother rose, and sought her heir :
 She saw the Nurse like one possessed,
 With wringing hands and sobbing breast.

"Sure some disaster has befall :
 Speak, Nurse ; I hope the boy is well."

"Dear Madam, think not me to blame,
 Invisible the Fairy came :
 Your precious babe is hence convey'd,
 And in the place a changeling laid.
 Where are the father's mouth and nose ?
 The mother's eyes, as black as sloes ?
 See, here, a shocking awkward creature,
 That speaks a fool in every feature."

"The woman's blind," the Mother cries,
 "I see wit sparkle in his eyes."

"Lord, Madam, what a squinting leer !
 No doubt the Fairy hath been here."

Just as she spoke, a pigmy sprite
 Pops through the keyhole swift as light ;
 Perch'd on the cradle's top he stands,
 And thus her folly reprimands.

"Whence sprung the vain conceited lie,
 That we the world with fools supply ?
 What ! give our sprightly race away
 For the dull helpless sons of clay !—
 Besides, by partial fondness shown,
 Like you, we dote upon our own.
 Where yet was ever found a Mother¹
 Who'd give her booby for another ?

¹ The care of parents for their offspring is well exemplified in this fable.

And should we change for human breed,
Well might we pass for fools indeed."¹

¹ The application of this fable is twofold; for whilst it slightly touches, by inference, the short-sightedness of human wishes, it also alludes to the false judgment which parental fondness forms, of juvenile error. The severe sarcasm passed by the fairy upon mortal infirmity is as true as the readiness with which we allow a reason to operate in our own case, and forbid it in another's, is frequent.—OWEN.





FABLE IV.

THE EAGLE AND THE ASSEMBLY OF ANIMALS.

As Jupiter's all-seeing eye
 Survey'd the worlds beneath the sky,
 From this small speck of earth were sent
 Murmurs and sounds of discontent;¹
 For everything alive complain'd
 That he the hardest life sustain'd.

¹ Nothing is more common than to be discontented with our own lot and to envy the situation of others, though nothing can be more unjust. To condemn and ridicule this species of discontent and envy is the purpose of this fable, and to show that no one would accept the offer of changing situations. Horace, before Gay, has exposed this foible, except that he introduces Jupiter as offering to men the power of changing their state; Gay applies it to animals.

Jove calls his eagle. At the word
Before him stands the royal bird.
The bird, obedient, from heaven's height,
Downward directs his rapid flight;
Then cited every living thing
To hear the mandates of his king.

"Ungrateful creatures! whence arise
These murmurs which offend the skies;
Why this disorder? say the cause;
For just are Jove's eternal laws.
Let each his discontent reveal:
To yon sour Dog I first appeal."

"Hard is my lot," the Hound replies,
"On what fleet nerves the Greyhound flies;
While I, with weary step and slow,
O'er plains, and vales, and mountains go.
The morning sees my chase begun,
Nor ends it till the setting sun."

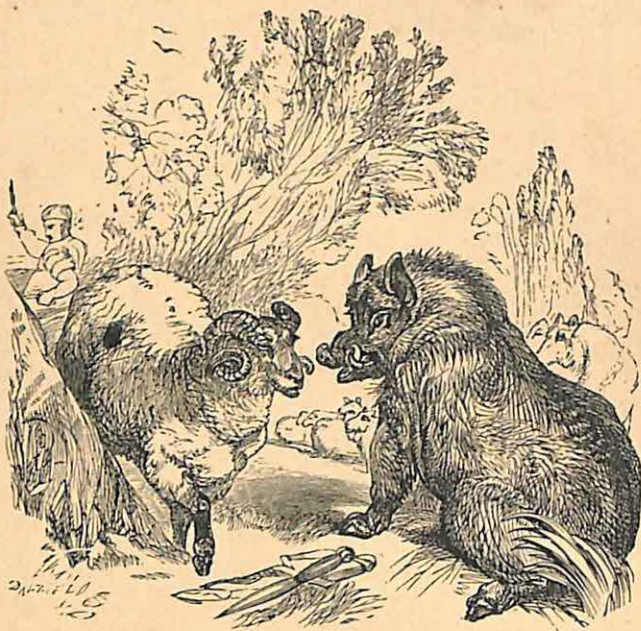
"When," says the Greyhound, "I pursue,
My game is lost, or caught in view;
Beyond my sight the prey's secure;
The hound is slow, but always sure;
And had I his sagacious scent,
Jove ne'er had heard my discontent."
The Lion craved the Fox's art;
The Fox the Lion's force and heart:
The Cock implored the Pigeon's flight,
Whose wings were rapid, strong, and light;
The Pigeon strength of wing despised,
And the Cock's matchless valour prized:
The Fishes wished to graze the plain,
The Beasts to skim beneath the main:

Thus, envious of another's state,
Each blamed the partial hand of Fate.

The Bird of Heaven¹ then cried aloud
"Jove bids disperse the murmuring crowd;
The God rejects your idle prayers.
Would ye, rebellious mutineers!
Entirely change your name and nature,
And be the very envied creature?—
What, silent all, and none consent?
Be happy then, and learn content;
Nor imitate the restless mind,
And proud ambition of mankind."

¹ "Jovis ales."—VIRGIL.





FABLE V.

THE WILD BOAR AND THE RAM.

AGAINST an elm a sheep was tied,
The butcher's knife in blood was dyed;
The patient flock, in silent fright,
From far beheld the horrid sight:
A savage Boar, who near them stood,
Thus mock'd to scorn the fleecy brood.

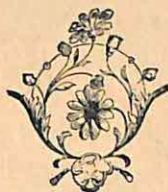
“All cowards should be served like you.
See, see, your murd'rer is in view:
With purple hands, and reeking knife,
He strips the skin yet warm with life.

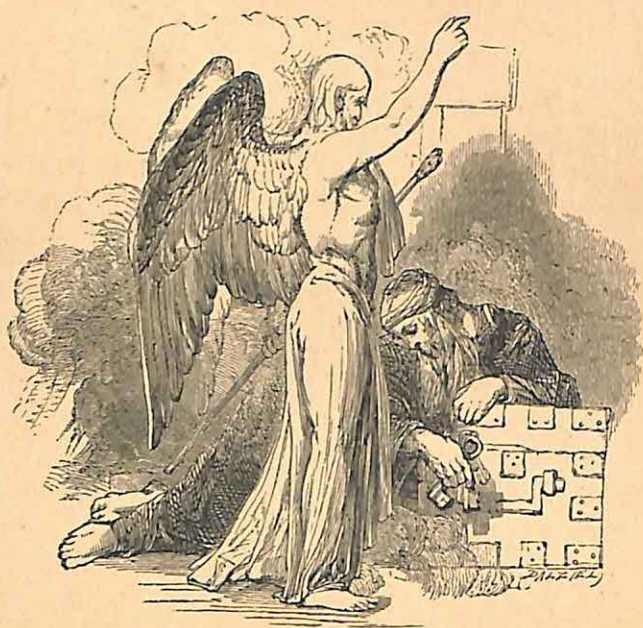
Your quarter'd sires, your bleeding dams,
The dying bleat of harmless lambs,
Call for revenge. O stupid race!
The heart that wants revenge is base."

"I grant," an ancient Ram replies,
"We bear no terror in our eyes;
Yet think us not of soul so tame,
Which no repeated wrongs inflame;
Insensible of every ill,
Because we want thy tusks to kill.
Know, those who violence pursue,
Give to themselves the vengeance due;
For in these massacres they find
The two chief plagues that waste mankind
Our skin supplies the wrangling bar,
It wakes their slumbering sons to war;
And well revenge may rest contented,
Since drums and parchment were invented."¹

¹ Parchment, which is so much used by lawyers, whom Gay calls *the wrangling bar*, is made from sheep's skin: but drums are usually covered with vellum, which is only parchment made of the skin of calves: It has a much finer grain. Gay observes in his "Trivia"—

"Here rows of drummers stand in martial file,
And with their *vellum* thunder shake the pile."
Book II. p. 17-18.





FABLE VI.

THE MISER AND PLUTUS.

THE wind was high, the window shakes,
With sudden start the Miser wakes ;
Along the silent room he stalks,
Looks back, and trembles as he walks.
Each lock and every bolt he tries,
In every creek and corner pries ;
Then opes the chest with treasure stored,
And stands in rapture o'er his hoard :
But now with sudden qualms possess'd,
He wrings his hands he beats his breast ;

By conscience stung he wildly stares,
And thus his guilty soul declares:

“Had the deep earth her stores confined.
This heart had known sweet peace of mind.
But virtue’s sold. Good gods! what price
Can recompense the pangs of vice!
O bane of good! seducing cheat!
Can man, weak man, thy power defeat?
Gold banish’d honour from the mind,
And only left the name behind;
Gold sow’d the world with every ill;
Gold taught the murderer’s sword to kill:
’Twas gold instructed coward hearts
In treachery’s more pernicious arts.
Who can recount the mischiefs o’er?
Virtue resides on earth no more!”—
He spoke, and sigh’d.—In angry mood
Plutus, his god, before him stood.
The Miser, trembling, lock’d his chest;
The vision frown’d, and thus address’d:—

“Whence is this vile ungrateful rant,
Each sordid rascal’s daily cant?
Did I, base wretch! corrupt mankind?—
The fault’s in thy rapacious mind.
Because my blessings are abused,
Must I be censured, cursed, accused?
Ev’n Virtue’s self by knaves is made
A cloak to carry on the trade;
And power (when lodged in their possession)
Grows tyranny, and rank oppression.
Thus, when the villain crams his chest,
Gold is the canker of the breast;

'Tis avarice, insolence, and pride,
And every shocking vice beside;
But when to virtuous hands 'tis given,¹
It blesses, like the dews of Heaven;
Like Heaven, it hears the orphan's cries,
And wipes the tears from widows' eyes.
Their crimes on gold shall misers lay,
Who pawn'd their sordid souls for pay?
Let bravos, then, when blood is spilt,
Upbraid the passive sword with guilt."

¹ These beautiful and feeling lines cannot be too often read and followed by persons in affluent circumstances; they show that although there is no gift of heaven which may not be ill employed, yet that its proper use by some, amply compensates for its abuse by others; and the Fable strongly inculcates this useful moral, that we are not to argue from the abuse of anything against its use.





FABLE VII.

• THE LION, THE FOX, AND THE GEESE.

A LION, tired with state affairs,
Quite sick of pomp, and worn with cares,
Resolv'd (remote from noise and strife)
In peace to pass his latter life.¹

• It was proclaimed; the day was set:—
Behold the general council met.

¹ The indolence of increasing years is frequently mistaken for resignation, and the apathy of age often passes for the self-denial of philosophy. Men conceal the real nature of vice and virtue, as they do the powers of certain half-known drugs—*by fine names.*—OWEN.

The Fox was Viceroy named; the crowd
To the new Regent humbly bow'd.
Wolves, bears, and mighty tigers bend,
And strive who most shall condescend.
He straight assumes a solemn grace,
Collects his wisdom in his face:
The crowd admire his wit, his sense;
Each word hath weight and consequence.
The flatterer all his art displays:
He who hath power is sure of praise!
A Fox stept forth before the rest,
And thus the servile throng address:
"How vast his talents, born to rule,
And train'd in Virtue's honest school!
What clemency his temper sways!
How uncorrupt are all his ways!
Beneath his conduct and command
Rapine shall cease to waste the land.
His brain hath stratagem and art;
Prudence and mercy rule his heart.
What blessings must attend the nation
Under this good administration!"

He said. A Goose, who distant stood,
Harangued apart the cackling brood.

"Whene'er I hear a knave commend,
He bids me shun his worthy friend.
What praise, what mighty commendation!
But 'twas a Fox who spoke th' oration.
Foxes this government may prize
As gentle, plentiful, and wise;
If they enjoy the sweets, 'tis plain
We Geese must feel a tyrant-reign.

What havoc now shall thin our race,
When every petty clerk in place,
To prove his taste, and seem polite,
Will feed on Geese both noon and night !”¹

¹ The observation of Lear admirably portrays the sycophancy of satellites to men in power :—

“*Lear*. Thou hast seen a farmer’s dog bark at a beggar?

Glo. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou might’st behold the great image of authority: a dog’s obeyed in office!”—OWEN.





FABLE VIII.

THE LADY AND THE WASP.

WHAT whispers must the Beauty bear !
 What hourly nonsense haunts her ear !
 Where'er her eyes dispense their charms,
 Impertinence around her swarms.
 Did not the tender nonsense strike,
 Contempt and scorn might look dislike ;
 Forbidding airs might thin the place,
 The slightest flap a fly can chase :
 But who can drive the num'rous breed ?—
 Chase one, another will succeed ;

Who knows a fool, must know his brother ;
One fop will recommend another :
And with this plague she's rightly curst,
Because she listen'd to the first.

As Doris, at her toilette's duty,
Sat meditating on her beauty,
She now was pensive, now was gay,
And loll'd the sultry hours away.

As thus in indolence she lies,
A giddy Wasp around her flies ;
He now advances, now retires,
Now to her neck and cheek aspires.
Her fan in vain defends her charms,
Swift he returns, again alarms ;
For by repulse he bolder grew,
Perch'd on her lip, and sipt the dew. [cries,

She frowns,—she frets. “Good gods!” she
“Protect me from these teasing flies :
Of all the plagues that heaven hath sent,
A Wasp is most impertinent.”

The hovering insect thus complain'd,—
“Am I then slighted, scorn'd, disdain'd ?
Can such offence your anger wake ?
'Twas beauty caused the bold mistake,
Those cherry lips that breathe perfume,
That cheek so ripe with youthful bloom,
Made me with strong desire pursue
The fairest peach that ever grew.”

“Strike him not, Jenny!” Doris cries,
“Nor murder Wasps like vulgar flies ;
For though he's free (to do him right),
The creature's civil and polite.

In ecstasies, away he posts ;
Where'er he came, the favour boasts ;
Braggs, how her sweetest tea he sips,
And shows the sugar on his lips.

The hint alarm'd the forward crew
Sure of success, away they flew :
They share the dainties of the day,
Round her with airy music play :
And now they flutter, now they rest,
Now soar again, and skim her breast.
Nor were they banish'd till she found
That Wasps have stings, and felt the wound.





FABLE IX.

THE BULL AND THE MASTIFF.

SEEK you to train your favourite boy ?
Each caution, every care employ ;
And ere you venture to confide,
Let his preceptor's heart be tried :
Weigh well his manners, life, and scope ;
On these depends thy future hope.
As on a time, in peaceful reign,
A Bull enjoy'd the flowery plain,
A Mastiff pass'd ; inflamed with ire,
His eyeballs shot indignant fire ;

He foam'd, he raged with thirst of blood,—
 —Spurning the ground, the monarch stood,
 And roar'd aloud: "Suspend the fight;
 In a whole skin go sleep to-night;
 Or tell me, ere the battle rage,
 What wrongs provoke thee to engage?
 Is it ambition fires thy breast,
 Or avarice, that ne'er can rest?
 From these alone unjustly springs
 The world-destroying wrath of kings."

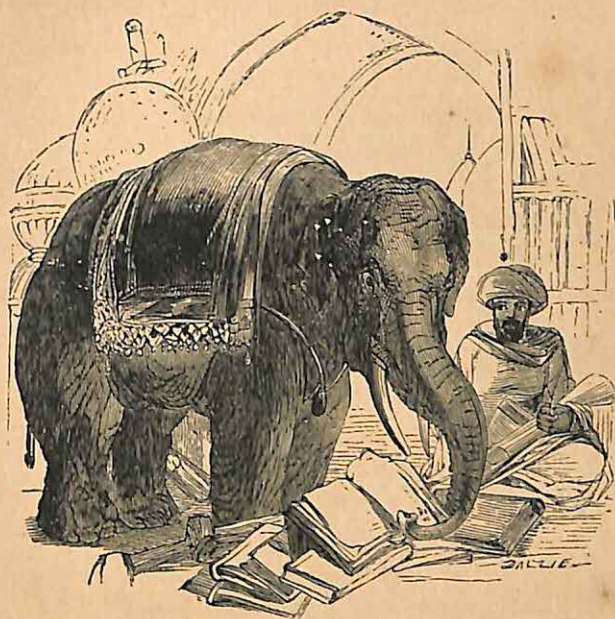
The surly Mastiff thus returns:
 "Within my bosom, glory burns.
 Like heroes of eternal name,
 Whom poets sing, I fight for fame.
 The butcher's spirit-stirring mind
 To daily war my youth inclined;
 He train'd me to heroic deed,
 Taught me to conquer or to bleed."

"Curs'd Dog," the Bull replied, "no more
 I wonder at thy thirst of gore;
 For thou beneath a butcher train'd,
 Whose hands with cruelty are stain'd,
 His daily murders in thy view
 Must, like thy tutor, blood pursue.
 Take, then, thy fate!" With goring wound
 At once he lifts him from the ground:
 Aloft the sprawling hero flies,
 Mangled he falls, he howls, and dies.¹

¹ The following lines from Dryden's translation of Juvenal, illustrate the application of this fable:—

"Children like tender osiers take the bow,
 And as they first are fashion'd always grow,
 For what we learn in youth, to that alone
 In age, we are by second nature, prone."

It is similar to the fable in Æsop, where the man about to be executed for a crime, bites his mother's ear off, when pretending to kiss her, because she had not corrected him for a theft when a boy.—OWEN.



FABLE X.

THE ELEPHANT AND THE BOOKSELLER.¹

THE man who with undaunted toils
 Sails unknown seas to unknown soils,
 With various wonders feasts his sight :
 What stranger wonders does he write ?
 We read, and in description view
 Creatures which Adam never knew ;

¹ It must be confessed, that it is a high breach of probability, to introduce an elephant into a bookseller's shop; the author felt the objection, and has endeavoured, in some measure, to apologize for it by observing that travellers often see and describe wonderful objects, which are not the less true because they are uncommon. Birds and beasts, in the language of fable, may be supposed to talk, but an elephant in a bookseller's shop must be acknowledged to be too forced and unnatural a conceit.

For when we risk no contradiction,
It prompts the tongue to deal in fiction.
Those things that startle me or you,
I grant are strange, yet may be true.
Who doubts that Elephants are found
For science and for sense renown'd ?
Borri records their strength of parts,¹
Extent of thought, and skill in arts ;
How they perform the law's decrees,
And save the state, the hangman's fees ;²
And how by travel understand
The language of another land.
Let those who question this report,
To Pliny's ancient page resort.³
How learn'd was that sagacious breed !
Who now (like them), the Greek can read ?

As one of these, in days of yore,
Rummaged a shop of learning o'er ;
Not, like our modern dealers, minding
Only the margin's breadth and binding ;
A book his curious eye detains,
Where, with exactest care and pains,
Were every beast and bird portray'd,
That e'er the search of man survey'd ;
Their natures and their powers were writ
With all the pride of human wit.
The page, he, with attention spread,
And thus remark'd on what he read :—

¹ Borri was a Milanese quack.

² In some parts of India, Elephants are employed in putting criminals to death, by trampling on them. Hence Gay says: *and save the hangman's fees.*

³ Pliny the elder was the author of a work upon Natural History, in which he relates many fabulous stories, including some very remarkable statements respecting the Elephant.

“Man with strong reason is endow'd,
A beast, scarce instinct is allow'd:
But let this author's worth be tried,
Tis plain that neither was his guide.
Can he discern the different natures,
And weigh the power of other creatures,
Who by the partial work hath shown,
He knows so little of his own?
How falsely is the spaniel drawn!
Did man from him, first learn to fawn?
A dog,—proficient in the trade,—
He, the chief flatterer Nature made?
Go, Man! the ways of courts discern,
You'll find a spaniel still might learn.
How can the fox's theft and plunder
Provoke his censure or his wonder?
From courtiers' tricks and lawyers' arts,
The fox might well improve his parts.
The lion, wolf, and tiger's brood,
He curses, for their thirst of blood:
But is not man to man a prey?
Beasts kill for hunger, men for pay.”

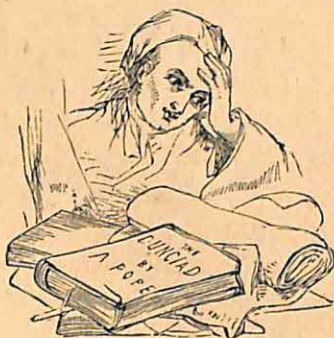
The Bookseller, who heard him speak,
And saw him turn a page of Greek,
Thought, “What a genius have I found!”
Then thus address'd with bow profound:

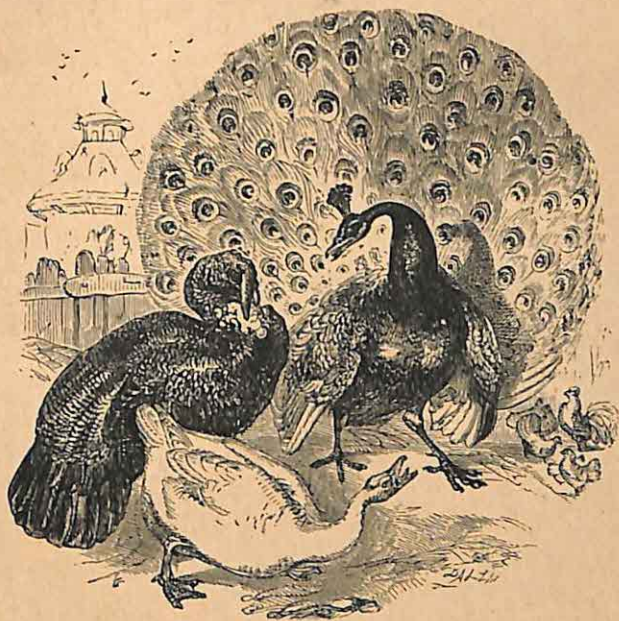
“Learn'd Sir, if you'd employ your pen
Against the senseless sons of men,
Or write the history of Siam,
No man is better pay than I am;
Or, since you're learn'd in Greek, let's see
Something against the Trinity.”

When wrinkling with a sneer, his trunk,
 "Friend," quoth the Elephant, "you're drunk ;
 E'en keep your money, and be wise ;
 Leave man on man, to criticise !
 For that you ne'er can want a pen,
 Among the senseless sons of men.
 They unprovok'd, will court the fray :
 Envy's a sharper spur than pay.
 No author ever spared a brother ;
 Wits are game-cocks, to one another,¹

¹ The above fable, like many of our poet's, is rather a compilation of sarcastic exposures of several faults, than an application to one; nevertheless the envious rivalry of authors, and the illiberality of critics, are particularly exposed. No society is generally such a combination, open or concealed, of envy, hatred, and malice, as a society of professed wits, or popular critics. The ignorance of the latter order has been well exposed by Lord Byron in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: their illiberality is amusingly reprov'd in the following story from Boccalini.

"A famous critic," says he, "having collected all the faults of an eminent poet, presented them to Apollo who, wishing to make a suitable return, desired the donor to pick the chaff from the corn in a sack of wheat which had just been thrashed out. The critic having completed the task with great industry and pleasure, Apollo presented him with,—the chaff for his trouble."—OWEN.





FABLE XI.

THE PEACOCK, THE TURKEY, AND THE GOOSE.

IN beauty, faults conspicuous grow ;
The smallest speck is seen on snow.
As near a barn, by hunger led,
A Peacock with the poultry fed,
All view'd him with an envious eye,
And mock'd his gaudy pageantry.

He, conscious of superior merit,
Contemns their base reviling spirit ;
His state and dignity assumes,
And to the sun displays his plumes,
Which, like the heaven's o'er-arching skies,
Are spangled with a thousand eyes,
The circling rays, and varied light,
At once confound their dazzled sight ;
On every tongue detraction burns,
And malice prompts their spleen by turns.

"Mark with what insolence and pride
The creature takes his haughty stride,"—
The Turkey cries. "Can spleen contain ?
Sure never bird was half so vain ;
But were intrinsic merit seen,
We Turkeys have the whiter skin."

From tongue to tongue they caught abuse,
And next was heard the hissing Goose :
"What hideous legs ! what filthy claws !
I scorn to censure little flaws ;
Then what a horrid squalling throat !
Ev'n owls are frightened at the note."

"True: those are faults," the Peacock cries,
"My scream, my shanks, you may despise ;
But such blind critics rail in vain ;
What, overlook my radiant train !
Know, did my legs (your scorn and sport),
The Turkey, or the Goose, support,
And did ye scream with harsher sound,
Those faults in you, had ne'er been found :
To all apparent beauties blind,
Each blemish strikes an envious mind."

Thus in assemblies have I seen
A nymph, of brightest charms and mien,
Wake envy in each ugly face,
And buzzing scandal fills the place.

¹ The moral here is applied to one species of envy alone, that of beauty but the fable may be referred to every kind of it equally. Scandal is like a snail, which crawls over the loveliest fruit, and feeds on that which its own venom has first made foul!—OWEN.





FABLE XII.

CUPID, HYMEN AND PLUTUS.

As Cupid in Cythera's grove¹
 Employ'd the lesser powers of Love;
 Some shape the bow, or fit the string,
 Some give the taper shaft its wing,
 Or turn the polish'd quiver's mould,
 Or head the darts with temper'd gold.
 Amidst their toil and various care
 Thus Hymen, with assuming air,

¹ Cythera, an island not far from Crete, in the Archipelago, sacred to Venus, from whence she was called Cythera.

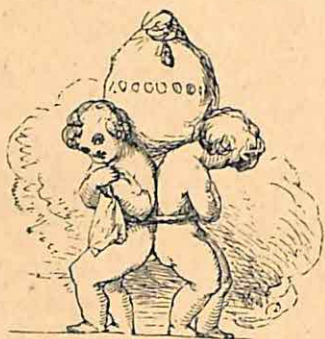
Address'd the god : " Thou purblind chit,
Of awkward and ill-judging wit,
If matches are no better made,
At once I must forswear my trade
You send me such ill-coupled folks,
That 'tis a shame to sell them yokes.
They squabble for a pin, a feather,
And wonder how they came together. •
The husband's sullen, dogged, shy,
The wife grows flippant in reply :
He loves command and due restriction,
And she as well likes contradiction :
She never slavishly submits,
She'll have her will, or have her fits.
He this way tugs, she t'other draws ;
The man grows jealous, and with cause ;
Nothing can save him but divorce,
And here the wife complies of course."

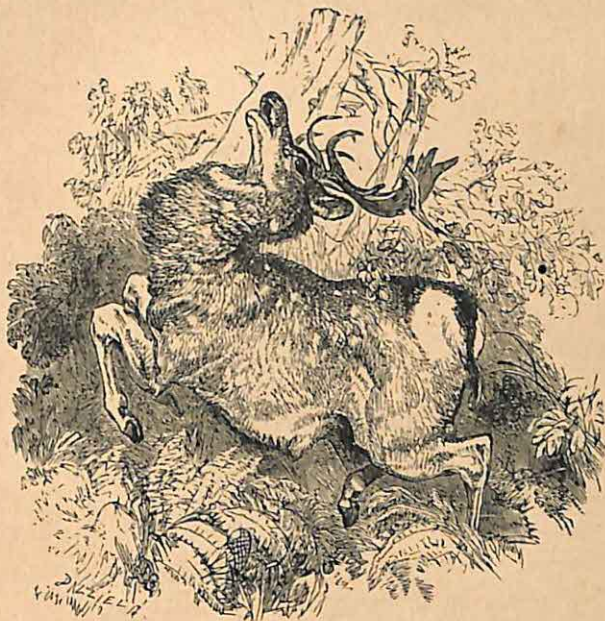
" When," says the boy, " had I to do
With either your affairs, or you ?
I never idly spend my darts :
You trade in mercenary hearts.
For settlements the lawyer's fee'd ;
Is my hand witness to the deed ?
If they like cat and dog agree.
Go rail at Plutus, not at me."

Plutus appear'd, and said, " 'Tis true,
In marriage, gold is all their view ;
They seek not beauty, wit, or sense,
And love is seldom the pretence.
All offer incense at my shrine,
And I alone the bargain sign.

How can Belinda blame her fate?
She only ask'd a great estate.
Doris was rich enough, 'tis true,
Her lord must give her title too;
And every man, or rich or poor,
A fortune asks, and asks no more."

Avarice, whatever shape it bears,
Must still be coupled with its cares.





FABLE XIII.

THE TAME STAG.

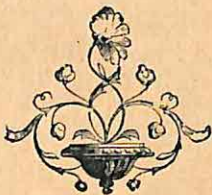
As a young Stag the thicket past,
The branches held his antlers fast ;
A clown, who saw the captive hung,
Across the horns his halter flung.

Now safely hamper'd in the cord,
He bore the present to his lord.
His lord was pleased, as was the clown,
When he was tipp'd with half-a-crown.
The Stag was brought before his wife ;
The tender lady begg'd his life ;

"How sleek's the skin ! how speck'd like ermine !
Sure never creature was so charming !"

At first within the yard confined,
He flies and hides from all mankind ;
Now bolder grown, with fix'd amaze,
And distant awe, presumes to gaze ;
Munches the linen on the lines,
And on a hood or apron dines,
He steals my little master's bread,
Follows the servants to be fed,
Nearer and nearer now he stands,
To feel the praise of patting hands ;
Examines every fist for meat,
And, though repulsed, disdains retreat ;
Attacks again with levell'd horns,
And man, that was his terror, scorns.

Such is the country maiden's fright,
When first a red-coat is in sight ;
Behind the door she hides her face,
Next time, at distance, eyes the lace.
She now can all his terrors stand,
Nor from his squeeze withdraws her hand.
She plays familiar in his arms,
And every soldier hath his charms :
From tent to tent she spreads her flame ;
For custom conquers fear and shame.





FABLE XIV.

THE MONKEY WHO HAD SEEN THE WORLD.

A MONKEY, to reform the times,
 Resolved to visit foreign climes;
 For men in distant regions roam
 To bring politer manners home.
 So forth he fares, all toil defies:
 Misfortune serves to make us wise.
 At length the treacherous snare was laid;
 Poor Pug was caught; to town convey'd;
 There sold. (How envied was his doom,
 Made captive in a lady's room!)

Proud, as a lover, of his chains,
He, day by day, her favour gains.
Whene'er the duty of the day
The toilet calls, with mimic play
He twirls her knots, he cracks her fan,
Like any other gentleman.
In visits, too, his parts and wit,
When jests grew dull, were sure to hit.
Proud with applause, he thought his mind
In every courtly art refined;
Like Orpheus, burnt with public zeal,
To civilize the monkey-weal;
So watch'd occasion, broke his chain,
And sought his native woods again.
The hairy sylvans round him press,
Astonish'd at his strut and dress:
Some praise his sleeve, and others glote¹
Upon his rich embroider'd coat.
His dapper periwig commending,
With the black tail behind depending;
His powder'd back, above, below,
Like hoary frosts, or fleecy snow;
But all, with envy and desire,
His fluttering shoulder-knot admire.
"Hear and improve," he pertly cries,
"I come to make a nation wise.
Weigh your own worth; support your place,
The next in rank to human race.
In cities long I pass'd my days,
Conversed with men, and learn'd their ways.

¹ *Glote*, probably for *glout*; and means, to look sullen with envy. Gay uses the same word in another place:

"With malice hiss, with envy *glote*,"—Fable 23, line 29.

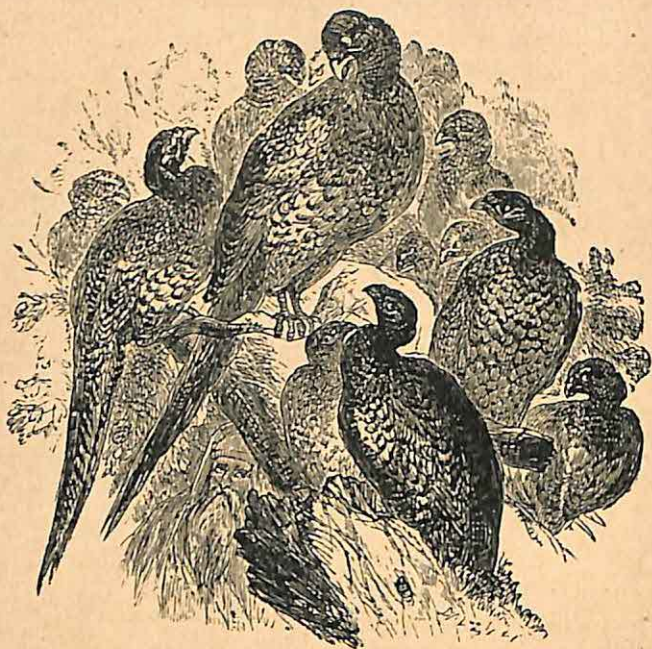
Their dress, their courtly manners see;
 Reform your state, and copy me.
 Seek ye to thrive? in flattery deal;
 Your scorn, your hate, with that conceal.
 Seem only to regard your friends,
 But use them for your private ends.
 Stint not to truth the flow of wit,
 Be prompt to lie, whene'er 'tis fit.
 Bend all your force to spatter merit;
 Scandal is conversation's spirit.
 Boldly to everything pretend,
 And men your talents shall commend.
 I knew the great. Observe me right;
 So shall you grow, like man, polite."

He spoke and bow'd. With muttering jaws,
 The wondering circle grinn'd applause.

Now, warm'd with malice, envy, spite,
 Their most obliging friends they bite;
 And fond to copy human ways,
 Practise new mischiefs all their days.

Thus the dull lad, too tall for school,
 With travel finishes the fool;
 Studious of every coxcomb's airs,
 He drinks, games, dresses, whores, and swears;
 O'erlooks with scorn all virtuous arts,
 For vice is fitted to his parts.





FABLE XV.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE PHEASANTS.

THE Sage, awaked at early day,
Through the deep forest took his way ;
Drawn by the music of the groves,
Along the winding gloom he roves ;
From tree to tree the warbling throats
Prolong the sweet alternate notes.
But where he past, he terror threw,
The song broke short, the warblers flew ;
The thrushes chatter'd with affright,
And nightingales abhorr'd his sight ;

All animals before him ran,
To shun the hateful sight of man.
“Whence is this dread of every creature?
Fly they our figure or our nature?”

As thus he walk'd in musing thought,
His ear imperfect accents caught.
With cautious step he nearer drew,
By the thick shade conceal'd from view.
High on the branch a Pheasant stood,
Around her all her listening brood;
Proud of the blessings of her nest,
She thus a mother's care express'd:

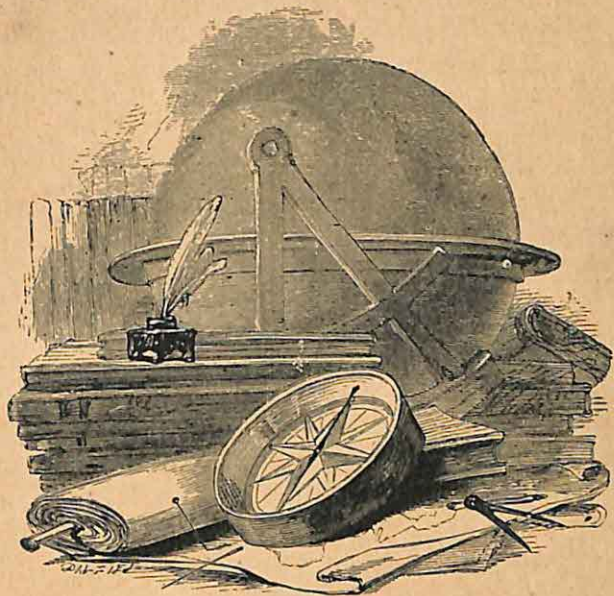
“No dangers here shall circumvent;
Within the woods enjoy content.
Sooner the hawk or vulture trust
Than man, of animals the worst:
In him ingratitude you find,
A vice peculiar to the kind.
The sheep, whose annual fleece is dyed
To guard his health, and serve his pride;
Forced from his fold and native plain,
Is, in the cruel shambles, slain.
The swarms who, with industrious skill,
His hives with wax and honey fill,
In vain whole summer days employ'd;
Their stores are sold, the race destroy'd.
What tribute from the goose is paid!
Does not her wing all science aid?”¹

¹ It is strange how the plumage of one goose serves the passion of another, and the feather of the bird aids the enunciation of the venomous spleen of the man! The quill is,—

“Torn from its parent-bird to form a pen,
That mighty instrument of little men!”—BYRON. OWEN.

Does it not lovers' hearts explain,
And drudge to raise the merchant's gain ?
What now rewards this general use ?
He takes the quills, and eats the goose.
Man then avoid, detest his ways,
So safety shall prolong your days.
When services are thus acquitted,
Be sure we Pheasants must be spitted."





FABLE XVI.

THE PIN AND THE NEEDLE.

'A PIN who long had served a beauty,
Proficient in the toilet's duty,
Had form'd her sleeve, confined her hair ;
Or given her knot a smarter air ;
Now nearest to her heart was placed
Now in her manteau's tail disgraced ;
But could she partial Fortune blame,
Who saw her lovers, served the same ?
At length from all her honours cast,
Through various turns of life she past :

Now glitter'd on a tailor's arm,
Now kept a beggar's infant warm ;
Now, ranged within a miser's coat,
Contributes to his yearly groat ;¹
Now, raised again from low approach
She visits in the doctor's coach :
Here, there, by various fortune tost,
At last in Gresham-hall was lost.²
Charm'd with the wonders of the show,
On every side, above, below,
She now of this or that, inquires ;
What least was understood, admires
'Tis plain each thing so struck her mind,
Her head's of virtuoso kind.

" And pray, what's this, and this, dear Sir ? "

" A needle," says th' interpreter.

She knew the name ; and thus the fool
Address'd her, as a tailor's tool.

" A needle with that filthy stone,
Quite idle, all with rust o'ergrown !
You better might employ your parts,
And aid the sempstress in her arts ;
But tell me how the friendship grew
Between that paltry flint and you ? "

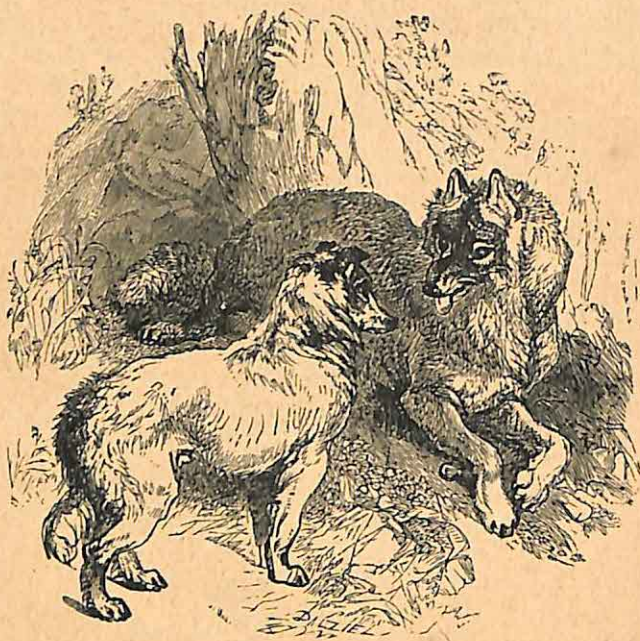
" Friend," says the Needle, " cease to blame ;
I follow real worth and fame.
Know'st thou the loadstone's power and art,
That virtue, virtues can impart ?

¹ This is in allusion to the proverb, "That a pin a day is a groat a year."

² This (Gresham Hall) was originally the house of Sir Thomas Gresham, the celebrated founder of the Royal Exchange, who not content with other munificent acts towards his fellow creatures, converted his own dwelling into a museum. The Royal Society originated here in 1645.—OWEN.

Of all his talents I partake,
Who then can such a friend forsake ?
'Tis I direct the pilot's hand
To shun the rocks and treacherous sand :
By me the distant world is known,
And either India is our own.
Had I with milliners been bred,
What had I been ? the guide of thread,
And drudged as vulgar Needles do,
Of no more consequence than you."





FABLE XVII.

THE SHEPHERD'S DOG AND THE WOLF.

A WOLF, with hunger, fierce and bold,
Ravaged the plains, and thinn'd the fold;
Deep in the wood, secure he lay,
The thefts of night regaled the day.
In vain the shepherd's wakeful care
Had spread the toils, and watch'd the snare;
In vain the dog pursued his pace,
The fleeter robber mock'd the chase.

As Lightfoot ranged the forest round,
By chance his foe's retreat he found.

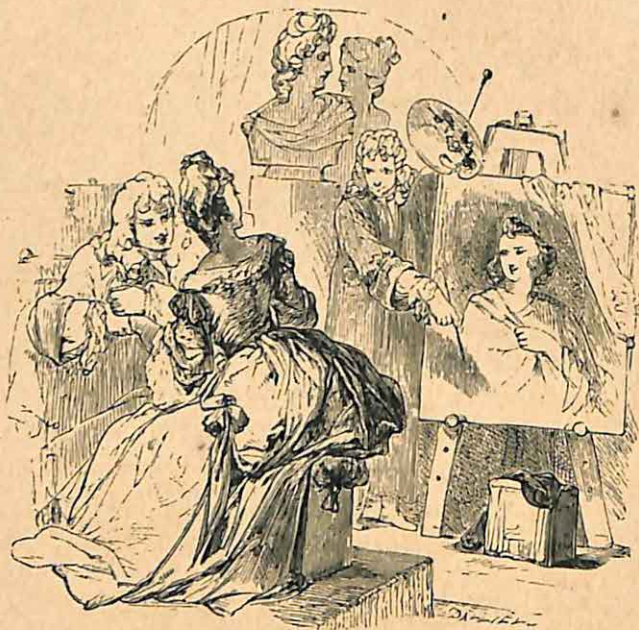
"Let us awhile the war suspend,
And reason as from friend to friend."

"A truce!" replies the Wolf. 'Tis done.
The Dog the parley thus begun.

"How can that strong intrepid mind
Attack a weak defenceless kind?
Those jaws should prey on nobler food,
And drink the boar's and lion's blood.
Great souls with generous pity melt,
Which coward tyrants never felt.
How harmless is our fleecy care!
Be brave, and let thy mercy spare."

"Friend," says the wolf, "the matter weigh;
Nature design'd us beasts of prey;
As such, when hunger finds a treat,
'Tis necessary Wolves should eat.
If, mindful of the bleating weal,
Thy bosom burn with real zeal,
Hence, and thy tyrant lord beseech;
To him repeat the moving speech:
A Wolf eats Sheep but now and then,
Ten thousands are devour'd by men.
An open foe may prove a curse
But a pretended friend is worse."





FABLE XVIII.

THE PAINTER WHO PLEASSED NOBODY AND
EVERYBODY.

LEST men suspect your tale untrue,
Keep probability in view.
The traveller leaping o'er those bounds,
The credit of his book confounds.
Who with his tongue hath armies routed,
Makes e'en his real courage doubted.

But flattery never seems absurd,
 The flatter'd always take your word :
 Impossibilities seem just,
 They take the strongest praise on trust.
 Hyperboles, though ne'er so great,
 Will still come short of self-conceit.

So very like, a Painter drew,
 That every eye, the picture knew.
 He hit complexion, feature, air,
 So just, the life itself was there.
 No flattery with his colours laid,
 To bloom restored the faded maid ;
 He gave each muscle all its strength ;
 The mouth, the chin, the nose's length ;
 His honest pencil touch'd with truth.
 And mark'd the date of age and youth.

He lost his friends, his practice fail'd ;
 Truth should not always be reveal'd.
 In dusty piles his pictures lay,
 For no one sent the second pay.
 Two bustos, fraught with every grace,
 A Venus' and Apollo's face,
 He placed in view ; resolved to please,
 Whoever sat, he drew from these,
 From these corrected every feature,
 And spirited each awkward creature.

All things were set, the hour was come,
 His pallet ready o'er his thumb ;
 My Lord appear'd, and seated right,
 In proper attitude and light,
 The Painter look'd, he sketch'd the piece,
 Then dipt his pencil, talk'd of Greece,

Of Titian's tints, of Guido's air;¹
 —“Those eyes, my Lord, the spirit there
 Might well a Raphael's hand require,
 To give them all the native fire.
 The features, fraught with sense and wit,
 You'll grant are very hard to hit;
 But yet with patience you shall view
 As much as paint and art can do.”

“Observe the work!”—My Lord replied,
 “Till now I thought my mouth was wide;
 Besides, my nose is somewhat long:
 Dear Sir, for me, 'tis far too young.”

“Oh! pardon me (the artist cried)
 In this, we Painters must decide.
 The piece, e'en common eyes must strike;
 I warrant it extremely like.”

My Lord examined it anew;
 No looking-glass seem'd half so true.

A lady came, with borrow'd grace
 He, from his Venus, form'd her face.
 Her lover praised the Painter's art,—
 So like the picture in his heart!
 To every age, some charm he lent,
 E'en beauties were almost content.

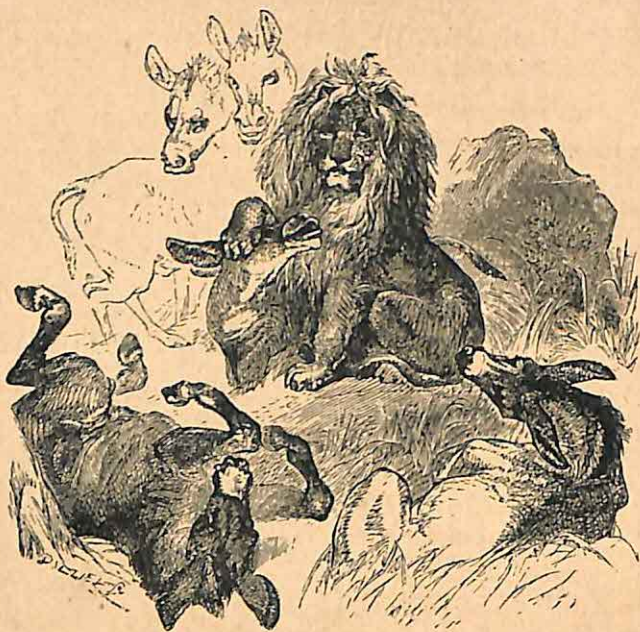
¹ These three painters (Titian, Guido, Raphael) seem to have been the favourites of Gay, and in his epistle to Paul Methuen, Esq., he again singles them out—

“Why didst thou, Kent, forgo thy native land,
 To emulate in picture Raphael's hand?
 Think'st thou for this to raise thy name at home?
 Go back, adorn the palaces of Rome;
 There on the walls let thy just labours shine,
 And Raphael live again in thy design.
 Yet stay awhile, call all thy genius forth,
 For Burlington unbiass'd knows thy worth;
 His judgment in thy master-strokes can trace,
 Titian's strong fire, and Guido's softer grace.”

Through all the town his art they praised;
His custom grew, his price was raised.
Had he the real likeness shown,
Would any man the picture own?
But when thus happily he wrought,
Each found the likeness in his thought.¹

¹ The moral of this Fable is extremely faulty, for it seems to imply that because flattery was attended with success in the instance of the painter, therefore this example is commendable and worthy of being followed: whereas nothing can be more erroneous, both in moral and practice. A painter who followed this practice would be sure of gaining little or no patronage, for portrait painting implies to take likenesses; and if no likeness is taken, even should the limner paint Apollos and Venuses, it is impossible he should succeed. It is far more likely that a painter like Sir Godfrey Kneller should obtain practice than such a flatterer. Sir Godfrey being applied to by a person who had no expression of countenance, refused to draw his portrait because, he said, *he had no face*. Gay acted very injudiciously in this instance. In the Address to the Duke of Chamberland he mentions flattery as a vice, and here he describes it as a means of success—ironically, perhaps, but the irony is difficult to be understood by young persons.





FABLE XIX.

THE LION AND THE CUB.

How fond are men of rule and place,
Who court it from the mean and base !
These cannot bear an equal nigh,
But from superior merit fly.
They love the cellar's vulgar joke,
And lose their hours in ale and smoke.
There o'er some petty club preside ;
So poor, so paltry, is their pride !
Nay, e'en with fools, whole nights will sit,
In hopes to be supreme in wit.

If these can read, to these I write,
To set their worth in truest light.
A Lion-cub, of sordid mind,
Avoided all the lion kind;
Fond of applause, he sought the feasts
Of vulgar and ignoble beasts;
With asses all his time he spent,
Their club's perpetual president.
He caught their manners, looks, and airs;
An ass in everything but ears!
If e'er his Highness meant a joke,
They grinn'd applause before he spoke;
But at each word what shouts of praise!
"Good gods! how natural he brays!"

Elate with flattery and conceit,
He seeks his royal sire's retreat;
Forward, and fond to show his parts,
His Highness brays; the Lion starts.

"Puppy! that cursed vociferation
Betrays thy life and conversation:
Coxcombs, an ever-noisy race,
Are trumpets of their own disgrace."

"Why so severe?" the Cub replies,
"Our senate always held me wise."

"How weak is pride!" returns the sire;
"All fools are vain when fools admire!
But know, what stupid asses prize,
Lions and noble beasts despise."¹

¹ The moral of this Fable, as in the case of most others of Gay, is placed at the commencement, instead of at the end, of the story.—OWEN.
The folly of seeking applause from persons of inferior station and ability, is justly reprobated in this Fable, from the example of the young Lion.



FABLE XX.

THE OLD HEN AND THE COCK.

“RESTRAIN your child!” you’ll soon believe
The text which says we sprung from Eve.

As an old Hen led forth her train,
And seem’d to peck to show the grain,
She raked the chaff, she scratch’d the ground,
And glean’d the spacious yard around :
A giddy chick, to try her wings,
On the well’s narrow margin springs,

And prone she drops. The mother's breast
All day with sorrow was possest.

A Cock she met; her son she knew;
And in her heart affection grew.

"My son," says she, "I grant your years
Have reach'd beyond a mother's cares.
I see you vigorous, strong, and bold;
I hear with joy your triumphs told.
'Tis not from Cocks thy fate I dread;
But let thy ever-wary tread
Avoid yon well; that fatal place
Is sure perdition to our race.
Print this my counsel on thy breast;
To the just gods I leave the rest."

He thank'd her care; yet day by day
His bosom burn'd to disobey,
And every time the well he saw,
Scorn'd in his heart the foolish law:
Near and more near each day he drew,
And long'd to try the dangerous view.
"What was this idle charge?" he cries,
"Let courage female fears despise.
Or did she doubt my heart was brave,
And therefore this injunction gave?
Or does her harvest store the place,—
A treasure for her younger race?
And would she thus my search prevent?
I stand resolved, and dare th' event."

Thus said, he mounts the margin round,
And pries into the depths profound.
He stretch'd his neck, and from below,
With stretching neck, advanced a foe:

With wrath his ruffled plumes he rears,
 The foe with ruffled plumes appears;
 Threat answered threat, his fury grew;
 Headlong to meet the war he flew;
 But when the watery death he found,
 He thus lamented as he drown'd;

"I ne'er had been in this condition,
 But for my mother's prohibition."¹

¹ Some very beautiful examples of filial obedience have been framed upon this Fable, but I think that they have led the writers into an error as to Gay's meaning in it, which went into a deeper principle than the mere recommendation of such a direct duty. He would exemplify that depraved habit of our nature which causes restriction to become a provocative to disobedience; for which cause the Persians were quite right in appointing one master, out of the four they set over each of their young princes, to instruct his pupil in self-denial and subjugation of his appetites. This thirst for forbidden knowledge, merely because it is forbidden, has ever been the scourge of the soul, and "Nitimur in vetitum" its motto, long before the time of Ovid.—OWEN.

The Rev. W. COXE says:—"The moral of this Fable is very defective, and inculcates a false principle, for, according to the doctrine here laid down, parents ought not to instruct their children, or prohibit them from doing wrong, because, as we are descended from Adam and Eve, that original frailty, which we are supposed to derive from them, may possibly lead us to disobey, for the sake of disobedience, and merely out of contradiction. The moral might have been easily improved. The Cock might have observed that he was deservedly punished for his disobedience, and was drowned for acting contrary to his mother's good advice, which his duty obliged him to follow."





FABLE XXI.

THE RATCATCHER AND CATS.

THE rats by night such mischief did,
Betty was every morning chid :
They undermined whole sides of bacon,
Her cheese was sapp'd, her tarts were taken ;
Her pasties, fenced with thickest paste,
Were all demolish'd and laid waste :
She cursed the Cat, for want of duty,
Who left her foes a constant booty.

An engineer, of noted skill,
Engaged to stop the growing ill.

From room to room he now surveys
Their haunts, their works, their secret ways;
Finds where they 'scape an ambuscade,
And whence the nightly sally's made.

An envious Cat from place to place,
Unseen, attends his silent pace:
She saw that if his trade went on,
The püring race must be undone;
So secretly removes his baits,
And every stratagem defeats.

Again he sets the poison'd toils,
And puss again the labour foils.

"What foe, to frustrate my designs,
My schemes thus nightly countermines?"
Incensed, he cries; "this very hour
The wretch shall bleed beneath my power."

So said, a pond'rous trap he brought,
And in the fact poor Puss was caught.

"Smuggler," says he, "thou shalt be made
A victim to our loss of trade."

The captive Cat, with piteous mews,
For pardon, life, and freedom sues:

"A sister of the science spare;
One interest is our common care."

"What insolence!" the man replied;
"Shall Cats with us the game divide?"

Were all your interloping band
Extinguish'd, or expell'd the land,
We Ratcatchers might raise our fees,
Sole guardians of a nation's cheese!"

A Cat, who saw the lifted knife,
Thus spoke, and saved her sister's life

“In every age and clime we see
Two of a trade can ne’er agree.¹
Each hates his neighbour for eneroaching;
’Squire stigmatizes ’squire for poaching;
Beauties with beauties are in arms,
And scandal pelts each other’s charms;
Kings, too, their neighbour kings dethrone,
In hope to make the world their own:
But let us limit our desires,
Not war like beauties, kings, and ’squires;
For though we both one prey pursue,
There’s game enough for us and you.”

¹ The line, “Two of a trade can ne’er agree,” has become a well-known proverb.





FABLE XXII.

THE GOAT WITHOUT A BEARD.

'Tis certain that the modish passions
Descend among the crowd, like fashions.
Excuse me, then, if pride, conceit,
(The manners of the fair and great)
I give to monkeys, asses, dogs,
Fleas, owls, goats, butterflies, and hogs.
I say that these are proud, what then?
I never said they equal men.

A Goat (as vain as Goat can be)
Affected singularity;

Whene'er a thymy bank he found,
He roll'd upon the fragrant ground,
And then with fond attention stood,
Fix'd o'er his image in the flood.

"I hate my frowzy beard," he cries,
"My youth is lost in this disguise.
Did not the females know my vigour,
Well might they loath this reverend figure."

Resolved to smooth his shaggy face,
He sought the barber of the place.
A flippant monkey, spruce and smart,
Hard by, profess'd the dapper art.
His pole with pewter basins hung,
Black rotten teeth in order strung,
Ranged cups, that in the window stood,
Lined with red rags, to look like blood,
Did well his threefold trade explain,
Who shaved, drew teeth, and breathed a vein.¹

The Goat he welcomes with an air,
And seats him in his wooden chair:
Mouth, nose, and cheek, the lather hides;
Light, smooth, and swift, the razor glides.

"I hope your custom, Sir," says Pug,
"Sure never face was half so smug!"

The Goat, impatient for applause,
Swift to the neighbouring hill withdraws;
The shaggy people grinn'd and stared,—

—"Heyday! what's here? without a beard!
Say, brother, whence the dire disgrace?
What envious hand hath robb'd your face?"—

¹ To breathe a vein—to *cup* or let blood. This is a graphic description of the ancient signs of the barbers (or barber-surgeons), who, as is well known, formerly joined the art of "Chirurgery" to that of shaving and dressing hair

When thus the fop with smiles of scorn :
 "Are beards by civil nations worn?—
 E'en Muscovites have mow'd their chins.²
 Shall we, like formal Capuchins³
 Stubborn in pride, retain the mode,
 And bear about the hairy load?
 Whene'er we through the village stray,
 Are we not mock'd along the way,
 Insulted with loud shouts of scorn,
 By boys, our beards disgraced and torn?"
 "Were you no more with Goats to dwell,
 Brother, I grant you reason well;"
 Replies a bearded chief. "Beside,
 If boys can mortify thy pride,
 How wilt thou stand the ridicule
 Of our whole flock? Affected fool!
 Coxcombs, distinguish'd from the rest,
 To all but coxcombs are a jest."⁴

² The *Muscovites* or Russians were compelled by Peter the Great to shave their beards.

³ The *Capuchins*, an order of friars, who shave their heads, but suffer their beards to grow.

⁴ This Fable is somewhat akin to that of the Fox without a Tail, in *Æsop*, although what is there represented as a dexterous subterfuge to conceal a misfortune, is here the voluntary act of self-conceit. — OWEN.





FABLE XXIII.

THE OLD WOMAN AND HER CATS.

Who friendship with a knave hath made,
Is judged a partner in the trade.
The matron who conducts abroad
A willing nymph, is thought a bawd;
And if a modest girl is seen
With one who cures a lover's spleen,
We guess her not extremely nice,
And only wish to know her price.

'Tis thus that on the choice of friends
Our good or evil name depends.

A wrinkled hag, of wicked fame,
Beside a little smoky flame
Sate hovering, pinch'd with age and frost;
Her shrivell'd hands, with veins emboss'd,
Upon her knees her weight sustains,
While palsy shook her crazy brains:
She mumbles forth her backward prayers,
An untamed scold of fourscore years:
About her swarm'd a numerous brood
Of Cats, who, lank with hunger, mew'd.

Teased with their cries her choler grew,
And thus she sputter'd, "Hence, ye crew!
Fool that I was, to entertain
Such imps, such fiends, a hellish train!
Had ye been never housed and nursed,
I for a witch had ne'er been cursed.
To you I owe that crowds of boys
Worry me with eternal noise;
The horseshoe's nail'd—each threshold's guard!—
Straws laid across, my pace retard,
The stunted broom the wenches hide,
For fear that I should up and ride;
They stick with pins my bleeding seat,
And bid me show my secret teat."

"To hear you prate would vex a saint;
Who hath most reason of complaint?"
Replies a Cat: "Let's come to proof.
Had we ne'er starved beneath your roof,
We had, like others of our race,
In credit lived as beasts of chase.

'Tis infamy to serve a hag;
Cats are thought imps, her broom a nag!
And boys against our lives combine,
Because, 'tis said, your Cats have nine."¹

¹ When Gay wrote his Fables, the belief in witchcraft, though much diminished, still prevailed; and it was not till the year 1735 that the absurd and inhuman laws against witchcraft were repealed. King James the First explained the practices of evil spirits, the compacts of witches, their ceremonies, the manner of detecting them, and the justice of punishing them; and in the first year of his reign the Parliament passed a law inflicting death on all persons invoking, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit, whereby any person should be destroyed, consumed, pined or wasted, in any part of the body. The consequence of this severe law, to the terror of old women, who were more particularly marked out as such, witches were discovered in such abundance that scarcely a village was without one; and in one particular place in Lancashire their number was supposed to be greater than that of the houses. And many innocent persons, distressed with poverty and age, were condemned to death by legal conviction in the courts of justice, and as many more suffered from the credulous fury of the populace. At present the influence of witches is, fortunately, chiefly confined to fables and fairy stories, although in some parts, notably in the West of England, the influence of the White Witch is still believed in, and his or her advice sought by many superstitious persons.





FABLE XXIV.

THE BUTTERFLY AND THE SNAIL.

ALL upstarts, insolent in place,
Remind us of their vulgar race.

As in the sunshine of the morn
A Butterfly, but newly born,
Sate proudly perking on a rose,
With pert conceit his bosom glows;
His wings, all glorious to behold,
Bedropt with azure, jet, and gold,

Wide he displays; the spangled dew
Reflects his eyes and various hue.

His now-forgotten friend, a Snail,
Beneath his house, with slimy trail
Crawls o'er the grass, whom when he spies,
In wroth he to the gardener cries—
“What means yon peasant's daily toil,
From choking weeds to rid the soil?
Why wake you to the morning's care?
Why with new arts correct the year?
Why grows the peach with crimson hue
And why the plum's inviting blue?
Were they to feast his taste design'd,
That vermin of voracious kind?
Crush then the slow, the pilfering race,
So purge thy garden from disgrace.”

“What arrogance!” the Snail replied.
“How insolent is upstart pride!
Hadst thou not thus, with insult vain,
Provoked my patience to complain,
I had conceal'd thy meaner birth,
Nor traced thee to the scum of earth:
For scarce nine suns have waked the hours,
To swell the fruit, and paint the flowers,
Since I thy humbler life survey'd,
In base, in sordid guise array'd.
A hideous insect, vile, unclean,
You dragged a slow and noisome train,
And from your spider-bowels drew
Foul film, and spun the dirty clue.
I own my humble life, good friend;
Snail was I born, and Snail shall end.

And, what's a Butterfly? at best,
He's but a caterpillar drest;
And all thy race, a numerous seed,
Shall prove of caterpillar breed."¹

¹ The moral in this Fable directs our scorn to the vulgar pride and tyranny of upstart pretenders, in whom, like the ass in the lion's skin, the meanness of their original nature will peep out, in spite of all adventitious ornament of rank and fortune. This Fable exposes, from the example of the Butterfly, a feeling which is the mark of a narrow contracted mind; an upstart pride, which is puffed up with elevation, forgets its low station, and disdainfully looks down upon former associates. It at the same time commends, from the example of the Snail, that humility which is not ashamed of its own inferiority.





FABLE XXV.

THE SCOLD AND THE PARROT.

THE husband thus reproved his wife :
"Who deals in slander, lives in strife.
Art thou the herald of disgrace,
Denouncing war to all thy race ?
Can nothing quell thy thunder's rage,
Which spares nor friend, nor sex, nor age ?

That vixen tongue of your's, my dear,
Alarms our neighbours far and near.
Good gods ! 'tis like a rolling river,
That murmuring flows, and flows for ever !
Ne'er tired, perpetual discord sowing !
Like fame, it gathers strength by going."

"Hey-day," the flippant tongue replies,
"How solemn is the fool ! how wise !
Is Nature's choicest gift debarr'd ?—
Nay, frown not, for I will be heard.
Women of late are finely ridden,
A Parrot's privilege forbidden !
You praise his talk, his squalling song,
But wives are always in the wrong."

Now reputations flew in pieces
Of mothers, daughters, aunts, and nieces :
She ran the Parrot's language o'er,
Bawd, hussy, drunkard, slattern, whore ;
On all the sex she vents her fury,
Tries and condemns without a jury.

At once the torrent of her words
Alarm'd cat, monkey, dogs, and birds ;
All join their forces to confound her,
Puss spits, the monkey chatters round her ;
The yelping cur her heels assaults :
The magpie blabs out all her faults ;
Poll, in the uproar, from his cage,
With this rebuke outscram'd her rage :

"A Parrot is for talking prized,
But prattling women are despised.
She who attacks another's honour,
Draws every living thing upon her :

Think, Madam, when you stretch your lungs,
That all your neighbours too have tongues.
One slander must ten thousand get;
The world with interest pays the debt."¹

¹ The moral of this Fable is obvious, and it exemplifies the proverb of Solomon:—"It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." A work by a recent writer (Edna Lyall), "The Autobiography of a Slander," well illustrates the latter portion of this striking Fable.





FABLE XVI.

THE CUR AND THE MASTIFF.

A SNEAKING Cur, the mastiff's spy,
 Rewarded for his daily li
 With secret jealousies appears
 Set all together by the e
 Poor puss to-day was in grace,
 Another cat supplied his place;
 The hound was beat, the mastiff chid,
 The monkey was the reward forbid;

Each to his dearest friend grew shy,
And none could tell the reason why.
A plan to rob the house was laid:
The thief with love seduced the maid,
Cajol'd the Cur, and stroked his head,
And bought his secrecy with bread.
He next the Mastiff's honour tried,
Whose honest jaws the bribe defied:
He stretch'd his hand to proffer more;
The surly Dog his fingers tore.

Swift ran the Cur; with indignation
The master took his information.
"Hang him, the villain's cursed," he cries;
And round his neck the halter ties.

The Dog his humble suit preferr'd
And begg'd in justice to be heard.
The master sat. On either hand
The cited Dogs confronting stand;
The Cur the bloody tales relates,
And like a lawyer, aggravates.

"Judge not unheard," the Mastiff cried,
"But weigh the cause of either side.
Think not that treachery can be just;
Take not informers' words on trust;
They ope their hand to every pay,
And you and me by turns betray."

He spoke; and all the truth appear'd;
The Cur was hang'd, the Mastiff clear'd.¹

¹ This Fable also deals with scandal, but proves that retailers of scandal may in vain hope to escape detection; for like the cur in this Fable, liars will sooner or later be discovered and punished. Here also Solomon's words apply: "Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."



FABLE XXVII.

THE SICK MAN AND THE ANGEL.

“Is there no hope?” the sick man said.
The silent doctor shook his head;
And took his leave with signs of sorrow,
Despairing of his fee to-morrow.

When thus the Man, with gasping breath;
“I feel the chilling wound of Death!
Since I must bid the world adieu,
Let me my former life review.

I grant my bargains well were made;
But all men over-reach in trade:
'Tis self-defence in each profession;
Sure self-defence is no transgression.
The little portion in my hands,
By good security on lands
Is well increased. If, unawares,
My justice to myself and heirs
Hath let my debtor rot in jail,
For want of good sufficient bail;
If I by writ, or bond, or deed,
Reduced a family to need,
My will hath made the world amends;
My hope on charity depends.¹
When I am number'd with the dead,
And all my pious gifts are read,
By heaven and earth 'twill then be known
My charities were amply shown."

An Angel came: "Ah! friend," he cried,
"No more in flattering hope confide.
Can thy good deeds in former times
Outweigh the balance of thy crimes?
What widow or what orphan prays,
To crown thy life with length of days?
A pious action's in thy power,
Embrace with joy the happy hour.
Now while you draw the vital air,
Prove your intention is sincere:

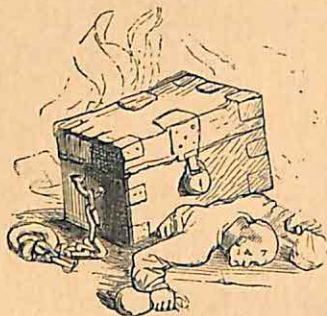
¹ The same word in Greek which signifies "grace" also means "charity," but with the usual waywardness and self-receiving reliance upon their own merits exhibited by mankind, the poor wretch here depends upon the latter meaning of the word, synonymous with his benevolent acts, instead of its proper meaning, the free, unmerited favour of Heaven. The angel's reply is very applicable to detect the hypocrisy of his boasted piety.—OWEN.

This instant give a hundred pound ;
Your neighbours want, and you abound."

"But why such haste," the sick Man whines,
"Who knows as yet what Heaven designs ?
Perhaps I may recover still :—
That sum and more are in my will."

"Fool," says the Vision, "now 'tis plain
Your life, your soul, your heaven, was gain.
From every side, with all your might,
You scraped, and scraped beyond your right ;
And after death would fain atone,
By giving what is not your own."

"While there is life, there's hope," he cried,
"Then why such haste ?"—so groan'd and died.





FABLE XXVIII.

THE PERSIAN, THE SUN, AND THE CLOUD.

Is there a bard whom genius fires,
Whose every thought the god inspires ?
When Envy reads the nervous lines,
She frets, she rails, she raves, she pines ;
Her hissing snakes with venom swell ;
She calls her venal train from hell :

The servile fiends her nod obey,
 And all Curl's authors are in pay.¹
 Fame calls up Calumny and Spite;
 Thus shadow owes its birth to light.

As prostrate to the god of day,
 With heart devout, a Persian lay,²
 His invocation thus begun:
 "Parent of light! all seeing Sun!
 Prolific beam, whose rays dispense³
 The various gifts of Providence;
 Accept our praise, our daily prayer,
 Smile on our fields, and bless the year."

A Cloud, who mock'd his grateful tongue,
 The day with sudden darkness hung;
 With pride and envy swell'd, aloud
 A voice thus thunder'd from the Cloud:

"Weak is this gaudy god of thine,
 Whom I at will, forbid to shine.
 Shall I nor vows nor incense know?—
 Where praise is due the praise bestow."

¹ Edmund Curl was a noted bookseller and publisher, much ridiculed by Pope and Swift and often alluded to in the "Dunciad." He has lately been brought forward again as one of the characters in Lytton's play, "Not so Bad as We Seem."—OWEN.

Curl, it may be remembered, wrote and published the first biography of Gay, in the year following the poet's death. He died in 1747, aged 72. Gay has, in another part of his works, satirized poor Curl:—

"Were Prior, Congreve, Swift and Pope unknown,
 Poor slander selling Curl would be undone."

The Editor of Bishop Atterbury says of him, that "Whatever were his demerits, they were amply atoned for by his indefatigable industry in preserving our national remains: nor did he publish a single volume, but what, amidst a profusion of baser metal, contained some precious ore, some valuable reliques, which future collectors could nowhere else have found."

² Many of the ancient nations worshipped the Sun as the Supreme Being, but the Persians particularly; the Parsees still worship it.

³ *Prolific beam.* Fruitful.

Prior also applies the word in the same sense to the Sun:—

"From the middle of the world
 The sun's prolific rays are hurl'd."

With fervent zeal the Persian moved,
 Thus the proud calumny reproved;
 "It was that god who claims my pray'r,
 Who gave thee birth, and raised thee there;
 When o'er his beams the veil is thrown,
 Thy substance is but plainer shown:
 A passing gale, a puff of wind,
 Dispels thy thickest troops combined."

The gale arose; the vapour tost
 —The sport of winds,—in air was lost;¹
 The glorious orb the day refines:
 Thus Envy breaks, thus Merit shines.²

¹ The moral of this Fable is just, as the description is sublime: it shows that true greatness will always shine forth in the midst of the storms of life, and will finally overcome base envy, which

— "Withereth at another's joy,

And hates that excellence it cannot reach."

THOMSON'S "SEASONS."

² This Fable exposes the fatal consequence of inveterate habits. Whenever any darling sin has taken full possession of our minds, it generally becomes a ruling passion, and accompanies us to the grave. Hypocrisy may, on a death-bed, affect to condemn: yet a long indulged habit will gain the victory, and lay bare the heart without disguise. — COXE.





FABLE XXIX.

THE FOX AT THE POINT OF DEATH

A Fox, in life's extreme decay,
Weak, sick, and faint, expiring lay ;
All appetite had left his maw,
And age disarm'd his mumbling jaw.
His numerous race around him stand,
To learn their dying sire's command :
He raised his head with whinnying moan,
And thus was heard the feeble tone :

"Ah, sons! from evil ways depart;
My crimes lie heavy on my heart.
See, see the murder'd geese appear!
Why are those bleeding turkeys there?
Why all around this cackling train,
Who haunt my ears for chickens slain?"
The hungry Foxes round them stared,
And for the promised feast prepared.

"Where, Sir, is all this dainty cheer?
Nor turkey, goose, nor hen, is here:
These are the phantoms of your brain,
And your sons lick their lips in vain."

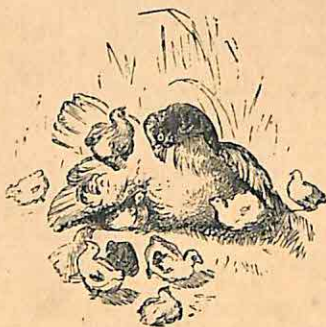
"O gluttons!" says the drooping sire,
"Restrain inordinate desire:
Your liquorish taste you shall deplore,
When peace of conscience is no more.
Does not the hound betray our pace,
And gins and guns destroy our race?
Thieves dread the searching eye of power,
And never feel the quiet hour.
Old age (which few of us shall know)
Now puts a period to my woe.
Would you true happiness attain,
Let honesty your passions rein;
So live in credit and esteem,
And the good name you lost, redeem."

"The counsel's good," a Fox replies,
"Could we perform what you advise.
Think what our ancestors have done?
A line of thieves from son to son:
To us descends the long disgrace,
And infamy hath mark'd our race.

Though we, like harmless sheep, should feed,
Honest in thought, in word, and deed;
Whatever hen-roost is decreased,
We shall be thought to share the feast.
The change shall never be believed:
A lost good name is ne'er retrieved."

"Nay, then," replies the feeble Fox:
"But, hark! I hear a hen that clucks:
Go, but be moderate in your food:
A chicken, too, might do me good."¹

¹ This Fable of hypocrisy somewhat resembles Fable xxvii., except in the additional feature here exhibited, of the fancy which besets men that they have forsaken their vices, when really they are too old to practise them.—OWEN.





FABLE XXX.

THE SETTING DOG AND THE PARTRIDGE.

THE ranging Dog the stubble tries,
And searches every breeze that flies.
The scent grows warm ; with cautious fear
He creeps, and points the covey near ;
The men in silence, far behind,
Conscious of game the net unbind.

A Partridge, with experience wise,
 The fraudulent preparation spies;
 She mocks their toils, alarms her brood,
 The covey springs, and seeks the wood;
 But, ere her certain wing she tries,
 Thus to the creeping Spaniel cries:
 "Thou fawning slave to man's deceit,
 Thou pimp of luxury, sneaking cheat,
 Of thy whole species, thou disgrace,
 Dogs should disown thee of their race!
 For if I judge their native parts,
 They're born with honest, open hearts;
 And, ere they served man's wicked ends,
 Were generous foes, or real friends."

When thus the Dog, with scornful smile:
 "Secure of wing, thou dar'st revile.
 Clowns are to polish'd manners blind:
 How ign'rant is the rustic mind!
 My worth sagacious courtiers see,
 And to preferment rise like me.
 The thriving pimp, who beauty sets,
 Hath oft enhanced a nation's debts;
 Friend sets¹ his friend, without regard,
 And ministers his skill reward:
 Thus train'd by man, I learnt his ways,
 And growing favour feasts my days."

"I might have guess'd," the Partridge
 said,
 "The place where you were train'd and fed;

¹ The meaning here attached to this word, "set," as in the line but one above, is to betray; the metaphor being obviously taken from the act of a dog discovering game. The noun "setter" is used in the same sense by Poins, speaking of Gadshill, Henry IV. Part I. Act ii. Scene 2.—OWEN.

Servants are apt, and in a trice
 Ape to a hair their master's vice.
 You came from court, you say—Adieu!"
 She said, and to the covey flew.¹

¹ With his usual bitterness against court intrigue, engendered by his own disappointment, Gay here attacks the servility with which the courtier fawns upon his patron, and the treachery which is ever ready, in the pernicious atmosphere of a court, to poison and betray friendship. Moreover, he alludes to the exact reflection of the vices of the upper classes, which the lower strive to exhibit, though those will admit who have mixed in upper society, that the grossest vulgarity of feeling, if not of manner, is frequently found amongst people of highest rank.—OWEN.





FABLE XXXI.

THE UNIVERSAL APPARITION.

A RAKE, by every passion ruled,
 With every vice his youth had cool'd ;
 Disease his tainted blood assails,
 His spirits droop, his vigour fails :
 With secret ills at home he pines,
 And, like infirm old age, declines.

As twinged with pain, he pensive sits,
 And raves, and prays, and swears, by fits :
 A ghastly phantom, lean and wan,
 Before him rose, and thus began :

“My name, perhaps, hath reach'd your ear;
Attend, and be advised by Care.
Nor love, nor honour, wealth, nor pow'r,
Can give the heart a cheerful hour
When health is lost. Be timely wise:
With health all taste of pleasure flies.”

Thus said, the phantom disappears.
The wary counsel waked his fears:
He now from all excess abstains,
With physic purifies his veins;
And, to procure a sober life,
Resolves to venture on a wife.

But now again the Sprite ascends—
Where'er he walks his ear attends;
Insinuates that beauty's frail,
That perseverance must prevail;
With jealousies his brain inflames,
And whispers all her lovers' names.
In other hours she represents
His household charge, his annual rents,
Increasing debts, perplexing duns,
And nothing for his younger sons.

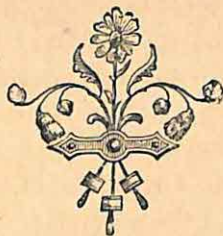
Straight all his thought to gain he turns,
And with the thirst of lucre burns.
But, when possess'd of fortune's store.
The Spectre haunts him more and more;
Sets want and misery in view,
Bold thieves and all the murdering crew;
Alarms him with eternal frights,
Infests his dream, or wakes his nights.
How shall he chase this hideous guest?
Power may p'r'aps protect his rest.

To power he rose. Again the Sprite
Besets him, morning, noon, and night;
Talks of Ambition's tottering seat,
How Envy persecutes the great;
Of rival hate, of treach'rous friends,
And what disgrace his fall attends.

The court he quits to fly from Care.
And seeks the peace of rural air:
His groves, his fields, amused his hours;
He pruned his trees, he raised his flowers.
But Care again his steps pursues,
Warns him of blasts, of blighting dews,
Of plundering insects, snails, and rains,
And droughts that starved the labour'd plains.
Abroad, at home, the Spectre's there;
In vain we seek to fly from Care.

At length he thus the Ghost address:
"Since thou must be my constant guest
Be kind, and follow me no more;
For Care, by right, should go before."¹

¹ Under a representation of the vanity of all human pursuits, which closely resembles the picture given of life by Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, Gay, draws an application of the virtue of prudence, which, by preventing ill, may forestall anxiety.—OWEN.





FABLE XXXII.

THE TWO OWLS AND THE SPARROW.

Two formal Owls together sat,
Conferring thus in solemn chat :
“ How is the modern taste decay'd !
Where's the respect to wisdom paid ?
Our worth the Grecian sages knew ;
They gave our sires the honour due ;
They weigh'd the dignity of fowls,
And pry'd into the depth of Owls.

Athons, the seat of learned fame,
With general voice revered our name ;
On merit title was conferr'd,
And all adored th' Athenian bird."¹

"Brother, you reason well," replies
The solemn mate, with half-shut eyes ;
"Right: Athens was the seat of learning ;
And truly wisdom is discerning.
Besides, on Pallas' helm we sit,²
The type and ornament of wit :
But now, alas ! we're quite neglected,
And a pert Sparrow's more respected."

A Sparrow, who was lodged beside,
O'erhears them soothe each other's pride,
And thus he nimbly vents his heat :

"Who meets a fool must find conceit.
I grant you were at Athens graced,
And on Minerva's helm were placed ;
But every bird that wings the sky,
Except an Owl, can tell you why.
From hence they taught their schools to
know

How false we judge by outward show ;
That we should never look on esteem,
Since fools as wise as you, might seem.
Would ye contempt and scorn avoid,
Let your vain-glory be destroy'd ;
Humble your arrogance of thought,
Pursue the ways by nature taught ;

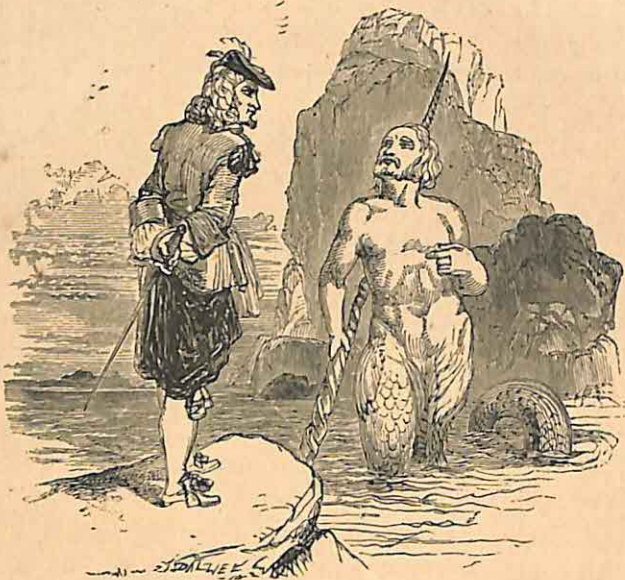
¹ The owl (*the Athenian bird*) was much respected at Athens as being the favourite bird of Pallas or Minerva, the protectress of the city.

² The figure of an owl was usually placed on the helmet of Pallas or Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom.

So shall you find delicious fare,
And grateful farmers praise your care;
So shall sleek mice your chase reward,
And no keen cat find more regard."¹

¹ The moral of the Fable, says Owen, is rather forced, for the owl was dedicated to Minerva, the patroness of Athens, on account of its symbolizing the far-sightedness of wisdom, in looking through the darkness of ignorance and error; thus a wise man, like an owl, sees where others are blind. Otherwise the reproof by the poet of vain assumption is forcible enough, as well as of the error of human judgment, in being guided by external appearances.





FABLE XXXIII.

THE COURTIER AND PROTEUS.

WHENE'ER a Courtier's out of place,
The country shelters his disgrace ;
Where, doom'd to exercise and health,
His house and gardens own his wealth.
He builds new schemes, in hope to gain
The plunder of another reign ;

Like Philip's son, would fain be doing,¹
And sighs for other realms to ruin.

As one of these (without his wand),
Pensive along the winding strand
Employ'd the solitary hour,
In projects to regain his power,
The waves in spreading circles ran,
Proteus arose, and thus began :

"Came you from court ? for in your mien
A self-important air is seen."

He frankly own'd his friends had trick'd him
And how he fell his party's victim.

"Know," says the god, "by matchless skill
I change to every shape at will ;
But yet I'm told, at court you see
Those who presume to rival me."

Thus said : a snake, with hideous trail,
Proteus extends his scaly mail.

"Know," says the man, "tho' proud in place,
All courtiers are of reptile race.
Like you, they take that dreadful form,
Bask in the sun, and fly the storm ;
With malice hiss, with envy gloat,
And for convenience change their coat ;
With new-got lustre rear their head,
Though on a dunghill born and bred."

¹ Alexander, the son of Philip, king of Macedon, who is said to have sighed and shed tears because he had no more realms or worlds to conquer.

See also Fable 15, lines 17 to 20, in Part 2, "When Philip's son, etc."

When it is considered that Gay wrote his Fables by desire of Queen Caroline, and for the instruction of the Duke of Cumberland, it must be confessed that he cannot be accused of flattery to Courts or Courtiers. On the contrary, he takes every occasion to censure Courts and rail at Courtiers, an example of which occurs in this Fable, as well as in that of the Setting Dog and the Partridge, a proof of his spirit at least, if not of his discretion.

Sudden the god a lion stands ;
He shakes his mane, he spurns the sands ;
Now a fierce lynx, with fiery glare ;
A wolf, an ass, a fox, a bear.

"Had I ne'er lived at court," he cries,
"Such transformation might surprise ;
But there, in quest of daily game,
Each able Courtier acts the same.
Wolves, lions, lynxes, while in place,
Their friends and fellows are their chase.
They play the bear's and fox's part,
Now rob by force, now steal with art.
They sometimes in the senate bray,
Or, changed again to beasts of prey,
Down from the lion to the ape,
Practise the frauds of every shape."
So said, upon the god he flies,
In cords the struggling captive ties.

"Now, Proteus ! now (to truth compell'd)
Speak, and confess thy art excell'd.
Use strength, surprise, or what you will,
The Courtier finds evasions still ;
Not to be bound by any ties,
And never forced to leave his lies."





FABLE XXXIV.

THE MASTIFF.

THOSE who in quarrels interpose,
Must often wipe a bloody nose.

A Mastiff, of true English blood,
Loved fighting better than his food,
When dogs were snarling for a bone,
He long'd to make the war his own,
And often found (when two contend)
To interpose obtain'd his end.

He gloried in his limping pace ;
The scars of honour seam'd his face,
In every limb a gash appears,
And frequent fights retrench'd his ears.

As, on a time, he heard from far
Two dogs engaged in noisy war,
Away he scours, and lays about him,
Resolved no fray should be without him.

Forth from his yard a tanner flies,
And to the bold intruder cries,
" A cudgel shall correct your manners :
Whence sprung this cursed hate to tanners ?
While on my dog you vent your spite,
Sirrah ! 'tis me you dare not bite."

To see the battle thus perplex'd,
With equal rage a butcher vex'd,
Hoarse-screaming from the circled crowd,
To the cursed Mastiff cries aloud,

" Both Hockley-hole and Mary-bone¹
The combats of my dog have known :
He ne'er, like bullies, coward-hearted,
Attacks in public,—to be parted.
Think not, rash fool, to share his fame ;
Be his the honour or the shame."

Thus said, they swore, and raved like
thunder,
Then dragg'd their fasten'd dogs asunder ;
While club and kicks from ev'ry side
Rebounded from the Mastiff's hide.

¹ Both these places were celebrated bear-gardens, and were frequently used for bull-baiting. The former was in Clerkenwell, near the modern Ray Street. In Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Mrs. Peachum says to Filch, "You must go to Hockley-in-the-Hole, and to Marybone, child, to learn valour."—OWEN.

All reeking now with sweat and blood,
Awhile the parted warriors stood ;
Then pour'd upon the meddling foe,
Who, worried, howl'd, and sprawl'd below.
He rose ; and, limping from the fray,
By both sides mangled, sneak'd away.





FABLE XXXV.

THE BARLEY-MOW AND THE DUNGHILL.

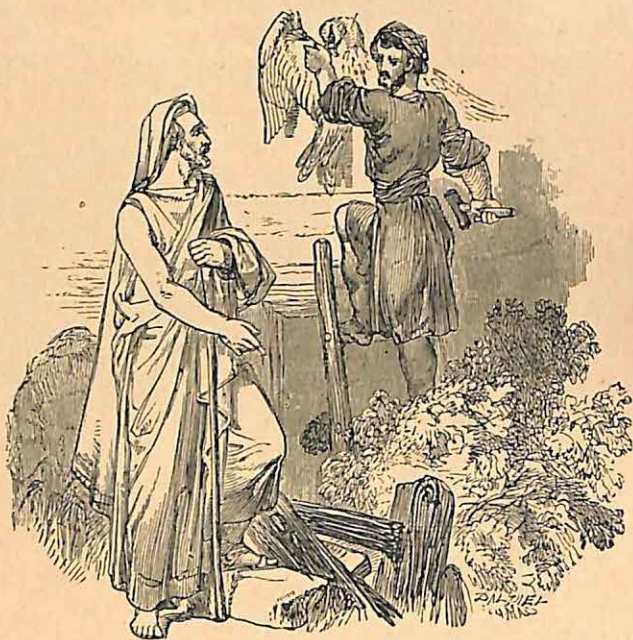
How many saucy airs we meet
From Temple Bar to Aldgate Street !
Proud rogues, who shared the South-sea prey,¹
And sprung, like mushrooms, in a day !
They think it mean to condescend
To know a brother or a friend ;
They blush to hear their mother's name,
And by their pride expose their shame.

¹ Gay alludes in this line to the South-Sea Bubble, from which he was himself a great sufferer. Full particulars of this will be found in the biography appended to the present volume.

As 'cross his yard, at early day,
 A careful farmer took his way,
 He stopp'd, and, leaning on his fork,
 Observed the flail's incessant work.
 In thought he measured all his store—
 His geese, his hogs, he numbered o'er ;
 In fancy weigh'd the fleeces shorn,
 And multiplied the next year's corn.
 A Barley-mow, which stood beside,
 Thus to its musing master cried :
 " Say, good sir, is it fit or right
 To treat me with neglect and slight ?
 Me, who contribute to your cheer,
 And raise your mirth with ale and beer ?
 Why thus insulted, thus disgraced,
 And that vile Dunghill near me placed ?
 Are those poor sweepings of a groom,
 That filthy sight, that nauseous fume,
 Meet objects here ? Command it hence ;
 A thing so mean must give offence."

The humble Dunghill thus replied :
 " Thy master hears, and mocks thy pride :—
 Insult not thus the meek and low ;
 In me thy benefactor know ;
 My warm assistance gave thee birth,
 Or thou hadst perish'd low in earth ;
 But upstarts, to support their station,
 Cancel at once all obligation."¹

¹ This fable strongly condemns ingratitude, which Shakespeare, in *King Lear*, calls a hideous monster. The ancients had a saying, that to accuse a man of ingratitude was to charge him with every crime; yet the contrary virtue is more frequently found amongst those called uncivilized, than amongst polite nations. The reason is, that from men being nearer upon a level, there is not so much inclination from false pride to forget it.



FABLE XXXVI.

PYTHAGORAS AND THE COUNTRYMAN.

PYTHAG'RAS rose at early dawn,¹
By soaring meditation drawn ;
To breathe the fragrance of the day,
Through flowery fields he took his way.

¹ Pythagoras was a Grecian philosopher, who taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, or that the souls of men after their decease pass into the bodies of men or animals; he therefore forbade the flaying of animals and the eating of flesh, to which Gay alludes in this Fable.

In musing contemplation warm,
His steps misled him to a farm,
Where on a ladder's topmost round
A peasant stood; the hammer's sound
Shook the weak barn. "Say, Friend, what care
Calls for thy honest labour there?"

The Clown, with surly voice, replies,
"Vengeance aloud for justice cries.
This kite, by daily rapine fed,
My hens' annoy, my turkeys' dread,
At length his forfeit life hath paid;
See on the wall his wings display'd.
Here nail'd, a terror to his kind,
My fowls shall future safety find;
My yard the thriving poultry feed,
And my barn's refuse fat the breed."

"Friend," says the Sage, "the doom is wise;
For public good the murderer dies:
But if these tyrants of the air
Demand a sentence so severe,
Think how the glutton, man, devours;
What bloody feasts regale his hours!
O impudence of power and might,
Thus to condemn a hawk or kite,
When thou, perhaps, carniv'rous sinner,
Hadst pullets yesterday for dinner!"

"Hold," cried the Clown, with passion heated,
"Shall kites and men alike be treated?
When Heaven the world with creatures stored,
Man was ordain'd their sovereign lord."
"Thus tyrants boast," the Sage replied,
"Whose murders spring from power and pride

Own then this manlike kite is slain
Thy greater luxury to sustain ;
For 'Petty rogues submit to Fate,
That great ones may enjoy their state.'"¹

¹ Garth's "Dispensary."





FABLE XXXVII.

THE FARMER'S WIFE AND THE RAVEN.

"WHY are those tears? why droops your head?
Is then your other husband dead?
Or does a worse disgrace betide:
Hath no one since his death applied?"

"Alas! you know the cause too well;
The salt is spilt, to me it fell:¹

¹ This is a very old superstition, but still prevalent, and in the picture of the Last Supper, by Leo. da Vinci, the saltcellar is represented as being overturned by Judas.—OWEN.

Then, to contribute to my loss,
 My knife and fork were laid across:¹
 On Friday, too!—the day I dread!
 Would I were safe at home in bed;
 Last night (I vow to Heaven 'tis true)
 Bounce from the fire a coffin flew,²
 Next post some fatal news shall tell;
 God send my Cornish friends be well!"

"Unhappy Widow, cease thy tears,
 Nor feel affliction in thy fears;
 Let not thy stomach be suspended;
 Eat now, and weep when dinner's ended:
 And when the butler clears the table,
 For thy dessert, I'll read my Fable."

Betwixt her swagging pannier's load
 A Farmer's Wife to market rode,
 And, jogging on, with thoughtful care,
 Summ'd up the profits of her ware;
 When, starting from her silver dream,
 Thus far and wide was heard her scream:

"That raven on yon left-hand oak
 (Curse on his ill-betiding croak)
 Bodes me no good." No more she said,³
 When poor blind Ball, with stumbling tread,

¹ Another old superstition, which is believed in to the present day, by many people, and not only those of the illiterate.

Knives were first introduced into England in 1563, but forks did not appear until 1611. For an interesting account of English superstitions and omens, see Drake's "Shakspeare and his Times."—OWEN.

² It is a vulgar superstition that when a piece of coal flies out of the fire, and seems to bear the shape of a coffin, that it predicts the death of some relative or friend.

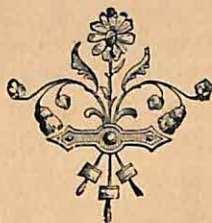
³ This fable ridicules those idle notions which predict sinister events from common occurrences, and that absurd superstition called second sight. Nothing is more common or unjust than for people to impute their disasters to supernatural causes, which are solely occasioned by their own faults. Thus the old woman in the Fable accuses the Raven of having portended the loss of her *brittle ware* by his croaking, whereas it was entirely owing to her own negligence.—COXE.

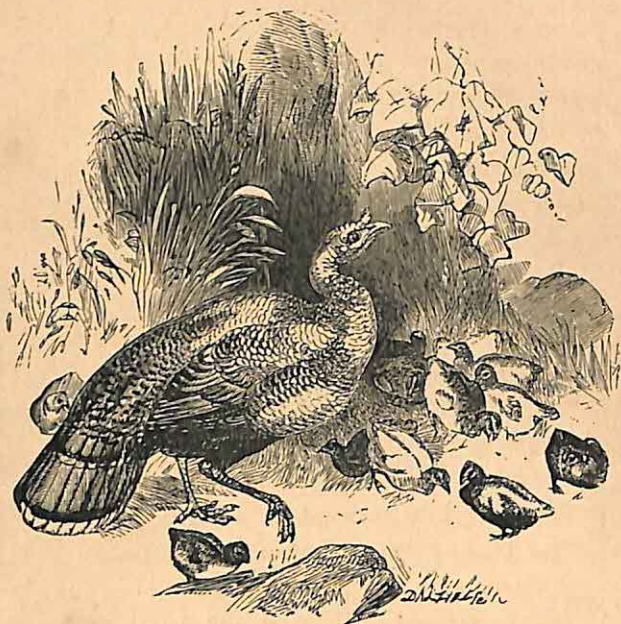
Fell prone ; o'erturned the pannier lay,
And her mash'd eggs bestrew'd the way.

She, sprawling in the yellow road,
Rail'd, swore, and cursed : " Thou croaking toad,
A murrain take thy whoreson throat ;
I knew misfortune in the note."

" Dame," quoth the Raven, " spare your oaths,
Unclench your fist, and wipe your clothes.
But why on me those curses thrown ?
Goody, the fault was all your own ;
For had you laid this brittle ware
On Dun, the old sure-footed mare,
Though all the Ravens of the Hundred,¹
With croaking had your tongue out-thunder'd,
Surefooted Dun had kept her legs,
And you, good woman, saved your eggs."

¹ The Hundred is the canton or district into which several of the counties of England are divided.





FABLE XXXVIII.

THE TURKEY AND THE ANT.

IN other men we faults can spy,
And blame the mote that dims their eye;¹
Each little speck and blemish find,
To our own stronger errors blind.

A Turkey, tired of common food,
Forsook the barn, and sought the wood;

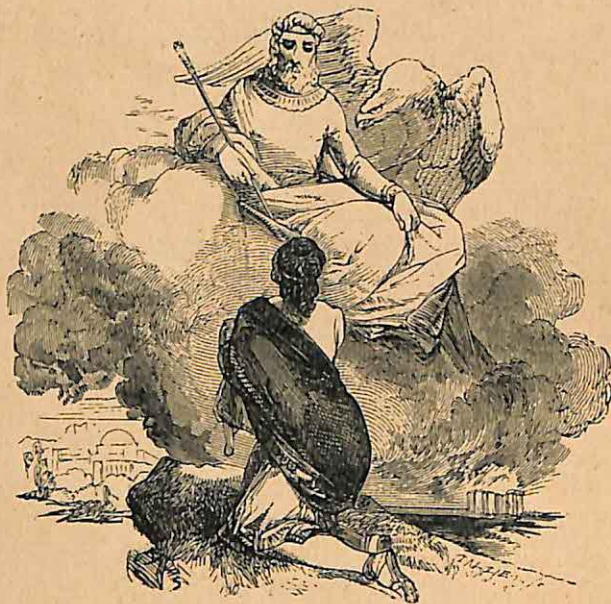
¹ The moral of this Fable is most excellent. It is founded on the first principles of reason and morality, not to be severe in condemning others for faults which we ourselves commit. Gay, in using the word *mote*, or small particle of matter, certainly alludes to the passage in Matt. vii., vv. 3, 4.

Behind her ran an infant train,
Collecting here and there, a grain.
"Draw near, my birds!" the mother cries,
"This hill delicious fare supplies.
Behold the busy negro race,¹
See millions blacken all the place!
Fear not; like me with freedom eat:
An Ant is most delightful meat.
How blest, how envied, were our life,
Could we but 'scape the poulterer's knife!
But man, curs'd man, on Turkeys preys,
And Christmas shortens all our days.
Sometimes with oysters we combine,
Sometimes assist the savoury chine;
From the low peasant to the lord,
The Turkey smokes on every board.
Sure men for gluttony are curs'd,
Of the seven deadly sins, the worst."

An Ant, who climb'd beyond his reach,
Thus answer'd from the neighbouring beech:
"Ere you remark another's sin,
Bid thy own conscience look within;
Control thy more voracious bill,
Nor, for a breakfast, nations kill."²

1 The Black Ants had this term applied to them because of their dark colour.

2 A friend of Tedyuscung once said to him when a little intoxicated, "There is one thing very strange, and which I cannot account for; it is, why the Indians get drunk so much more than the white people!" "Do you think that strange?" said the old chief; "why, it is not strange at all. The Indians think it no harm to get drunk whenever they can; but you white men say it is a sin, and yet get drunk nevertheless." The cause of censoriousness, I may observe also, is, that men are so taken up with playing the part of judges, that they forget their own proper condition is that of culprits.



FABLE XXXIX.

THE FATHER AND JUPITER.

THE Man to Jove his suit preferr'd ;
He begg'd a wife : his prayer was heard.
Jove wonder'd at his bold addressing ;
For how precarious is the blessing !
A wife he takes : and now for heirs
Again he worries Heaven with prayers.
Jove nods assent : two hopeful boys
And a fine girl reward his joys.

Now more solicitous he grew,
And set their future lives in view ;
He saw that all respect and duty
Were paid to wealth, to power, and beauty.
“Once more,” he cries, “accept my prayer ;
Make my loved progeny thy care :
Let my first hope, my favourite boy,
All Fortune’s richest gifts enjoy.
My next with strong ambition fire ;
May favour teach him to aspire,
Till he the step of power ascend,
And courtiers to their idol, bend.
With every grace, with every charm,
My daughter’s perfect features arm.
If Heaven approve, a Father’s bless’d.”—
Jove smiles, and grants his full request.

The first, a miser at the heart,
Studious of every griping art,
Heaps hoards on hoards with anxious pain,
And all his life devotes to gain.
He feels no joy, his cares increase,
He neither wakes, nor sleeps, in peace ;
In fancied want (a wretch complete)
He starves, and yet he dares not eat.¹
The next to sudden honours grew ;
The thriving art of courts he knew ;
He reach’d the height of power and place,
Then fell, the victim of disgrace.²

¹ ——— “Like a miser midst his store
Who grasps and grasps till he can hold no more ;
And when his strength is wanting to his mind,
Looks back and sighs on what he left behind.”—DRYDEN.

² See the fall of Sejanus magnificently described in the Tenth Satire of Juvenal ; and Johnson’s Vanity of Human Wishes.

Beauty with early bloom supplies
 His daughter's cheek, and points her eyes,
 The vain coquette each suit disdains,
 And glories in her lovers' pains.
 With age she fades, each lover flies;
 Contemn'd, forlorn, she pines and dies.

When Jove the Father's grief survey'd,
 And heard him Heaven and Fate upbraid,
 Thus spoke the god: "By outward show,
 Men judge of happiness and woe.
 Shall ignorance of good and ill
 Dare to direct th' eternal will?
 Seek virtue: and, of that possess'd,
 To Providence resign the rest."¹

¹ The vanity of human wishes ridiculed by Gay in this Fable, is finely displayed in the Tenth Satire of Juvenal, of which Dr. Johnson has given an excellent translation, or rather imitation. Dryden's translation of Virgil serves as a moral to the Fable:—

"What then remains? are we deprived of will?
 Must we not wish, for fear of wishing ill?
 Receive thy counsel and securely move;
 Entrust thy fortune to the powers above;
 Leave them to manage for thee and to grant
 What their unerring wisdom sees thee want.
 In goodness, as in greatness, they excel:
 Oh! that we loved ourselves but half so well."





FABLE XL.

THE TWO MONKEYS.

THE learned, full of inward pride,
 The fops of outward show deride;
 The fop, with learning at defiance,
 Scoffs at the pedant and the science;
 The Don, a formal solemn strutter,
 Despises Monsieur's airs and flutter;
 While Monsieur mocks the formal fool,
 Who looks, and speaks, and walks, by rule.
 Britain, a medley of the twain,
 As pert as France, as grave as Spain,

In fancy wiser than the rest,
 Laughs at them both, of both the jest,
 Is not the Poet's chiming close,
 Censured by all the sons of Prose?
 While bards of quick imagination
 Despise the sleepy prose narration.
 Men laugh at apes, they men contemn;
 For what are we, but apes to them?

Two Monkeys went to Southwark fair,
 No critics had a sourer air:
 They forced their way through draggled folks,
 Who gaped to catch Jack Pudding's jokes;¹
 Then took their tickets for the show,
 And got by chance the foremost row.
 To see their grave observing face
 Provok'd a laugh throughout the place.
 "Brother," says Pug, and turn'd his head,
 "The rabble's monstrously ill-bred."

Now through the booth loud hisses ran,
 Nor ended till the show began.
 The tumbler whirls the flip-flap round;²
 With sommersets he shakes the ground;³
 The cord beneath the dancer springs;
 Aloft in air the vaulter swings;

¹ *Jack Pudding*, or the Merry Andrew, who usually attends a mountebank at fairs and wakes, and who is also mentioned by Gay in his sixth Pastoral, line 83:—

"The mountebank now treads the stage, and sells
 His pills, his balsams, and his ague spells:
 Now o'er and o'er the nimble tumbler springs;
 And on the rope the vent'rous maiden swings,
Jack Pudding in his party-coloured jacket,
 Tosses the glove, and jokes at ev'ry packet."

² *Flip-flap*. A kind of rattle.

³ *Sommersets*; usually spelt "summersault." The word is derived from "soubresaut."

Distorted now, now prone depends,
Now through his twisted arms ascends;
The crowd, in wonder and delight,
With clapping hands applaud the sight.

With smiles, quoth Pug, "If pranks like these
The giant apes of reason please,
How would they wonder at our arts?
They must adore us for our parts.
High on the twig I've seen you cling,
Play, twist, and turn in airy ring:
How can those clumsy things like me
Fly with a bound from tree to tree?
But yet, by this applause, we find
These emulators of our kind
Discern our worth, our parts regard,
Who our mean mimics thus reward."

"Brother," the grinning mate replies,
"In this I grant that man is wise,
While good example they pursue,
We must allow some praise is due;
But when they strain beyond their guide,
I laugh to scorn the mimic pride;
For how fantastic is the sight,
To meet men always bolt upright,
Because we sometimes walk on two!
I hate the imitating crew."¹

¹ Mr. Owen says of this Fable:—"This is one of the most finished of Gay's productions, if we consider the lively vein of satire so justly levelled at the ignorant and supercilious conduct of mankind, which, wishing to arrogate all excellency, even of physical power, to itself, strives after what may be termed, 'brute accomplishments.' The observation in the last line is a fac-simile of the indolent pride which characterises the observations of many, and might pass, word for word, for a prim speech of some fine lady, newly raised to a precarious dignity, looking down upon those whose society she has just quitted, but now considers as her inferiors; or for the pedantic arrogance of some inflated scholar, who boasts the knowledge of every language and science, but whom a blacksmith could surpass in common sense."



FABLE XLI.

THE OWL AND THE FARMER.

AN Owl of grave deport and mien,
 Who (like the Turk) was seldom seen,
 Within a barn had chose his station,
 As fit for prey and contemplation.
 Upon a beam aloft he sits,
 And nods, and seems to think, by fits.
 (So have I seen a man of news,
 Or Post-boy or Gazette peruse,¹

¹ *Post-boy*. Formerly the name of a newspaper.
 Gay, in another work, couples the *Post-boy* and the *Gazette* together:—

"A party at Cambray met,
 Which drew all Europe's eyes;

'Twas call'd in *Post-boy* and *Gazette*
 The Quadruple allies."—"BALLAD ON QUADRILLE."

Smoke, nod, and talk with voice profound,
And fix the fate of Europe round.)
Sheaves piled on sheaves, hid all the floor :—
At dawn of morn to view his store
The Farmer came. The hooting guest,
His self-importance, thus exprest :

“Reason in man is mere pretence :
How weak, how shallow, is his sense !
To treat with scorn the Bird of Night,
Declares his folly or his spite.
Then, too, how partial is his praise.
The lark's, the linnet's chirping lays,
To his ill-judging ears are fine,
And nightingales are all divine :
But the more knowing feather'd race
See wisdom stamp'd upon my face.
Whene'er to visit light I deign,
What flocks of fowl compose my train !
Like slaves, they crowd my flight behind,
And own me of superior kind.”

The Farmer laugh'd and thus replied :
“Thou dull important lump of pride !
Dar'st thou with that harsh grating tongue
Depreciate birds of warbling song ?
Indulge thy spleen : know, men and fowl
Regard thee, as thou art, an Owl,
Besides, proud Blockhead ! be not vain
Of what thou call'st thy slaves and train :
Few follow Wisdom or her rules ;
Fools in derision follow fools.”



FABLE XLII.

THE JUGGLERS.

A JUGGLER long through all the town
 Had raised his fortune and renown ;
 You'd think (so far his art transcends)
 The devil at his fingers' ends.

Vice heard his fame, she read his bill ;
 Convinced of his inferior skill,
 She sought his booth, and from the crowd
 Defied the man of art aloud.

"Is this then he so famed for sleight ?
 Can this slow bungler cheat your sight ?

Dares he with me dispute the prize?
I leave it to impartial eyes."

Provoked, the Juggler cried, "'Tis done;
In science I submit to none."

Thus said, the cups and balls he play'd;
By turns this here, that there, convey'd.
The cards, obedient to his words,
Are by a fillip turn'd to birds.
His little boxes change the grain:
Trick after trick deludes the train.
He shakes his bag, he shows all fair;
His fingers spread, and nothing there:
Then bids it rain with showers of gold;
And now his ivory eggs are told!
But when from thence the hen he draws,
Amazed spectators hum applause.

Vice now stept forth, and took the place,
With all the forms of his grimace.

"This magic looking-glass," she cries,
"(There, hand it round) will charm your eyes."
Each eager eye the sight desired,
And every man himself admired.¹

Next, to a Senator addressing,
"See this bank-note,—observe the blessing—
Breathe on the bill. Hey, pass! 'Tis gone."
Upon his lips a padlock shown.
A second puff the magic broke;
The padlock vanish'd, and he spoke.²

¹ This signifies the contamination of the moral perception, by vice. —OWEN.

² He here touches at the bribery which seals or opens the senator's lips: now loud, now, "pulveris exigui jactu" with the gold upon his itching palm, calm and quiet as a lamb; for

"Money is the only power
That all mankind fall down before."—"HUDIBRAS"—OWEN.

Twelve bottles ranged upon the board,
All full, with heady liquor stored,
By clean conveyance disappear;
And now two bloody swords are there.

A purse she to a thief exposed;
At once his ready fingers closed.
He opes his fist, the treasure's fled;
He sees a halter in its stead,
She bids Ambition hold a wand;
He grasps a hatchet in his hand.¹

A box of charity she shows.
Blow here; and a churchwarden blows.
'Tis vanish'd with conveyance neat,
And on the table smokes a treat.
She shakes the dice, the board she knocks,
And from all pockets fills her box.

She next a meagre rake address:
"This picture see; her shape, her breast!
What youth, and what inviting eyes!
Hold her, and have her." With surprise,
His hand exposed a box of pills,
And a loud laugh proclaim'd his ills.

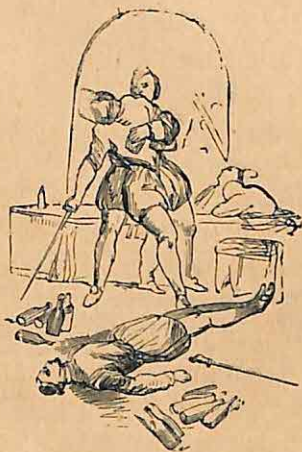
A counter in a miser's hand,
Grew twenty guineas at command:
She bids his heir the sum retain,
And 'tis a counter now again.

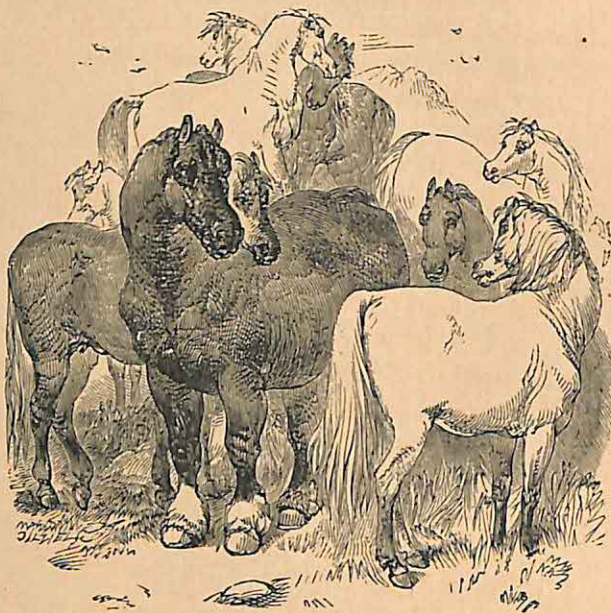
A guinea with her touch, you see
Take every shape but Charity;
And not one thing you saw, or drew,
But changed from what was first in view.

¹ Because the last ascent of ambition often terminates upon the scaffold.
—OWEN.

The Juggler now, in grief of heart,
With this submission own'd her art :
"Can I such matchless sleight withstand !
How practice hath improved your hand !
But now and then I cheat the throng ;
You every day, and all day long."¹

¹ This Fable abounds with moral lessons.





FABLE XLIII.

THE COUNCIL OF HORSES.

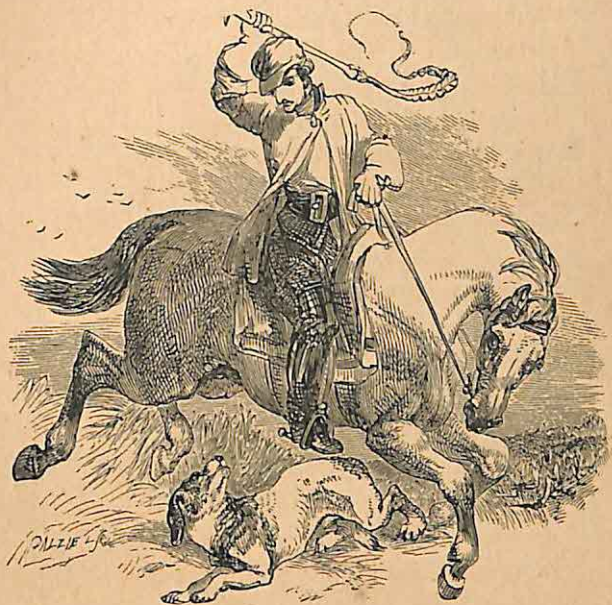
UPON a time a neighing Steed,
Who grazed among a numerous breed,
With mutiny had fired the train,
And spread dissension through the plain.
On matters that concern'd the state
The Council met in grand debate.
A Colt, whose eyeballs flamed with ire
Elate with strength and youthful fire,

In haste stept forth before the rest,
And thus the listening throng address:
 "Good gods! how abject is our race,
Condemn'd to slavery and disgrace!
Shall we our servitude retain,
Because our sires have borne the chain?
Consider, friends, your strength and might;
'Tis conquest to assert your right.
How cumbrous is the gilded coach!
The pride of man is our reproach.
Were we design'd for daily toil,
To drag the ploughshare through the soil,
To sweat in harness through the road,
To groan beneath the carrier's load?
How feeble are the two-legged kind!
What force is in our nerves combined!
Shall then our nobler jaws submit
To foam and champ the galling bit?
Shall haughty man my back bestride?
Shall the sharp spur provoke my side?
Forbid it heavens! Reject the rein;
Your shame, your infamy disdain.
Let him the lion first control,
And still the tiger's famish'd growl.
Let us, like them, our freedom claim,
And make him tremble at our name."
 A general nod approved the cause,
And all the circle neigh'd applause.
When, lo! with grave and solemn pace,
A steed advanced before the race,
With age and long experience wise;
Around he cast his thoughtful eyes,

And, to the murmurs of the train,
Thus spoke the Nestor of the plain:¹

"When I had health and strength, like you,
The toils of servitude I knew;
Now grateful man rewards my pains,
And gives me all these wide domains.
At will, I crop the year's increase;
My latter life is rest and peace.
I grant to man we lend our pains,
And aid him to correct the plains;
And doth not he divide the care,
Through all the labours of the year?
How many thousand structures rise,
To fence us from inclement skies!
For us he bears the sultry day,
And stores up all our winter's hay;
He sows, he reaps the harvest's gain,
We share the toil, and share the grain.
Since every creature was decreed
To aid each other's mutual need,
Appease your discontented mind,
And act the part by Heaven assign'd."
The tumult ceased. The Colt submitted;
And, like his ancestors, was bitted.

¹ "The Nestor of the Plain." The oldest horse, from Nestor, King of Pylos, a Grecian hero, and the oldest warrior at the Siege of Troy. He is said to have lived three ages; and his eloquence was so great, that Homer describes his words, dropping from his lips like honey. The moral of this Fable is contained in these beautiful lines:—"It enjoins us not to repine at the dispensations of Providence, but to be contented in our respective situations; to act in the best manner we are able the part assigned to us by Heaven, and not to give way to discontent, which the author of 'The Night Thoughts' justly calls, 'Incurable consumption of our peace'" (Night 7, l. 30).



FABLE XLIV.

THE HOUND AND THE HUNTSMAN.

IMPERTINENCE at first is borne
With heedless slight, or smiles of scorn :
Teased into wrath, what patience bears
The noisy fool who perseveres ?

The morning wakes, the Huntsman sounds,
At once rush forth the joyful Hounds ;
They seek the wood with eager pace,
Through bush, through brier, explore the chase.

Now scatter'd wide they try the plain,
And snuff the dewy turf in vain.
What care, what industry, what pains!
What universal silence reigns!

Ringwood, a dog of little fame,
Young, pert, and ignorant of game,
At once displays his babbling throat;
The pack, regardless of the note,
Pursue the scent; with louder strain
He still persists to vex the train.

The Huntsman to the clamour flies,
The smacking lash he smartly plies.
His ribs all welk'd, with howling tone¹
The puppy thus express'd his moan:—

“I know the music of my tongue
Long since the pack with envy stung.
What will not spite? these bitter smarts
I owe to my superior parts.”

“When Puppies prate,” the Huntsman cried,
“They show both ignorance and pride:
Fools may our scorn, not envy, raise;
For envy is a kind of praise.
Had not thy forward noisy tongue
Proclaim'd thee always in the wrong,
Thou might'st have mingled with the rest,
And ne'er thy foolish nose confest:
But fools, to talking ever prone,
Are sure to make their follies known.”²

¹ *Welks*. Means those lumps or wales which the application of a whip leaves upon the skin; it is still used in that sense in some of the northern counties.

² This Fable is ably drawn to show the impossibility of teaching ignorance its own folly, when corroborated (as always) by self-conceit.



FABLE XLV.

THE POET AND THE ROSE.

I HATE the man who builds his name
On ruins of another's fame:
Thus prudes, by characters o'erthrown,
Imagine that they raise their own;
Thus scribblers covetous of praise,
Think slander can transplant the bays.
Beauties and bards have equal pride,
With both all rivals are decried.
Who praises Lesbia's eyes and feature,
Must call her sister "awkward creature;"

For the kind flattery's sure to charm,
When we some other nymph disarm.

As in the cool of early day

A Poet sought the sweets of May,
The garden's fragrant breath ascends,
And every stalk with odour bends.

A Rose he pluck'd : he gazed, admired,
Thus singing, as the Muse inspired :—

"Go, Rose, my Chloe's bosom grace ;

How happy should I prove,
Might I supply that envied place

With never-fading love !

There, Phoenix-like, beneath her eye,¹

Involved in fragrance, burn and die.

"Know, hapless flower ! that thou shalt find

More fragrant Roses there :

see thy withering head reclined

With envy and despair !

One common fate we both must prove ;

You die with envy, I with love."

"Spare your comparisons," replied

An angry Rose, who grew beside ;

"Of all mankind you should not flout us,

What can a Poet do without us !

In every love-song Roses bloom,

We lend you colour and perfume.

Does it to Chloe's charms conduce,

To found her praise on our abuse ?

Must we, to flatter her, be made

To wither, envy, pine, and fade ?"

¹ *Phoenix-like.* Gay alludes to the fabulous story of the Phoenix, a bird which was supposed by the ancients, at the conclusion of a long term of years, to burn itself on a pile of sweet-wood and aromatic gums, and to fire it with the wafting of its wings, and from its ashes was said to arise a young Phoenix.



FABLE XLVI.

THE CUR, THE HORSE, AND THE SHEPHERD'S DOG.

THE lad of all-sufficient merit,
With modesty ne'er damps his spirit;
Presuming on his own deserts,
On all alike his tongue exerts:
His noisy jokes at random throws,
And pertly spatters friends and foes.
In wit and war the bully race
Contribute to their own disgrace:

Too late the forward youth shall find
That jokes are sometimes paid in kind;
Or if they canker in the breast,
He makes a foe, who makes a jest.

A village Cur, of snappish race,
The pertest puppy of the place,
Imagined that his treble throat
Was blest with Music's sweetest note;
In the mid road he basking lay,
The yelping nuisance of the way;
For not a creature pass'd along
But had a sample of his song,
Soon as the trotting Steed he hears,
He starts, he cocks his dapper ears;
Away he scours, assaults his hoof;
Now near him snarls, now barks aloof!
With shrill impertinence attends,
Nor leaves him till the village ends.
It chanced, upon his evil day,
A Pad came pacing down the way;
The Cur, with never-ceasing tongue,
Upon the passing traveller sprung.
The Horse, from scorn provoked to ire,
Flung backward; rolling in the mire,
The Puppy howl'd, and bleeding lay;
The Pad in peace pursued his way.

A Shepherd's Dog, who saw the deed,
Detesting the vexatious breed,
Bespoke him thus: "When coxcombs prate,
They kindle wrath, contempt, or hate;
Thy teasing tongue had judgment tied,
Thou hadst not like a puppy died."



FABLE XLVII.

THE COURT OF DEATH.

DEATH, on a solemn night of state,
 In all his pomp of terror sate :
 Th' attendants of his gloomy reign,
 Diseases dire,—a ghastly train—
 Crowd the vast court ! With hollow tone
 A voice thus thunder'd from the throne :
 “ This night our minister we name ;
 Let every servant speak his claim ;
 Merit shall bear this ebon wand.”—
 All, at the word, stretch'd forth their hand.

Fever, with burning heat possess'd,
Advanced, and for the wand address'd :¹

"I to the weekly bills appeal,
Let those express my fervent zeal;
On every slight occasion near,
With violence I persevere."

Next Gout appears with limping pace,
Pleads how he shifts from place to place;
From head to foot how swift he flies,
And every joint and sinew plies;
Still working when he seems suppress'd.
A most tenacious stubborn guest.²

A haggard Spectre from the crew
Crawls forth, and thus asserts his due :
"Tis I who taint the sweetest joy,
And in the shape of Love destroy :
My shanks, sunk eyes, and noseless face,
Prove my pretension to the place."

Stone urg'd his ever-growing force ;
And next, Consumption's meagre corse,
With feeble voice, that scarce was heard,
Broke with short coughs, his suit preferr'd :
"Let none object my lingering way,
I gain, like Fabius, by delay ;
Fatigue and weaken every foe
By long attack, secure, though slow."³

¹ Fever, the offspring of poverty and dirt, nursed by parochial neglect, pampered by intoxication, and at last buried at the public charge!—OWEN.

² Gout, the son of sloth and sensuality, half-brother to fever, and descended in many cases from the "haggard spectre" hereinafter named.

³ This living death is seen, in its early stages, in manufacturing towns, where young bones and sinews are dissolved in gold, with which the employers purchase positions in parliament, where they prate about educating the ignorant, the rights of the poor, and enunciate principles of peace and charity!—*Vide* Minutes of the Factory System before the House of Commons.—OWEN.

Plague represents his rapid power,
Who thinn'd a nation in an hour.
All spoke their claim, and hoped the wand.—
Now expectation hush'd the band,
When thus the Monarch from the throne :

“ Merit was ever modest known.
What, no Physician speak his right !
None here ! but fees their toils requite.
Let then Intemperance take the wand,
Who fills with gold their zealous hand.
You, Fever, Gout, and all the rest,
(Whom wary men, as foes, detest)
Forego your claim ; no more pretend ;
Intemperance is esteem'd a friend.
He shares their mirth, their social joys,
And as a courted guest destroys :
The charge on him must justly fall,
Who finds employment for you all.¹

¹ This admirable but melancholy picture of the “thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to” is one of the finest efforts of the poet's muse, and the deduction is forcible and clear.—OWEN.





FABLE XLVIII.

THE GARDENER AND THE HOG.

A GARDENER of peculiar taste,
On a young Hog his favour placed,
Who fed not with the common herd;
His tray was to the hall prefer'd:
He wallow'd underneath the board,
Or in his master's chamber snored,
Who fondly stroked him every day,
And taught him all the puppy's play.
Where'er he went, the grunting friend
Ne'er fail'd his pleasure to attend.

As on a time the loving pair
Walk'd forth to tend the garden's care,
The master thus address'd the Swine :

" My house, my garden, all is thine !
On turnips feast whene'er you please,
And riot in my beans and peas ;
If the potato's taste delights,
Or the red carrot's sweet invites,
Indulge thy morn and evening hours,
But let due care regard my flow'rs :
My tulips are my garden's pride :
What vast expense those beds supplied !"

The Hog by chance one morning roam'd,
Where with new ale the vessels foam'd :
He munches now the steaming grains,
Now with full swill the liquor drains.
Intoxicating fumes arise ;
He reels, he rolls his winking eyes ;
Then staggering through the garden scours,
And treads down painted ranks of flowers :
With delving snout he turns the soil,
And cools his palate with the spoil.

The master came, the ruin spied ;
" Villain ; suspend thy rage," he cried,
" Hast thou, thou most ungrateful sot,
My charge, my only charge, forgot ?
What, all my flowers !" no more he said,
But gazed and sigh'd, and hung his head.

The Hog, with stuttering speech returns :
" Explain, Sir, why your anger burns.
See there, untouch'd, your tulips strown,
For I devour'd the roots alone."

At this the Gardener's passion grows;
From oaths and threats he fell to blows:
The stubborn brute the blow sustains,
Assaults his leg, and tears the veins.

Ah! foolish Swain! too late you find
That styes were for such friends design'd!
Homeward he limps with painful pace,
Reflecting thus on past disgrace—
"Who cherishes a brutal mate,
Shall mourn the folly soon or late."





FABLE XLIX.

THE MAN AND THE FLEA.

WHETHER on earth, in air, or main,
Sure everything alive is vain !

Does not the hawk all fowls survey,
As destined only for his prey ?
And do not tyrants, prouder things,
Think men were born for slaves to kings ?
When the crab views the pearly strands,¹
Or Tagus, bright with golden sands ;²

¹ *Pearly strands.* The beds of oysters in the Eastern seas, in which the pearls are contained and fished for.

² The *Tagus*, a river in ancient Lusitania, on whose banks Lisbon is situated, supposed to abound in gold-dust
Rowe, in his "Ode on the King's Birthday," 1718, had said, before Gay :—
"And Tagus bright in sands of gold."

Or crawls beside the coral grove,
And hears the ocean roll above ;
"Nature is too profuse," says he,
"Who gave all these to pleasure me !"

When bordering pinks and roses bloom,
And every garden breathes perfume ;
When peaches glow with sunny dyes,
Like Laura's cheek when blushes rise ;
When the huge figs the branches bend,
When clusters from the vine depend,
The snail looks round on flower and tree,
And cries, "All these were made for me !"

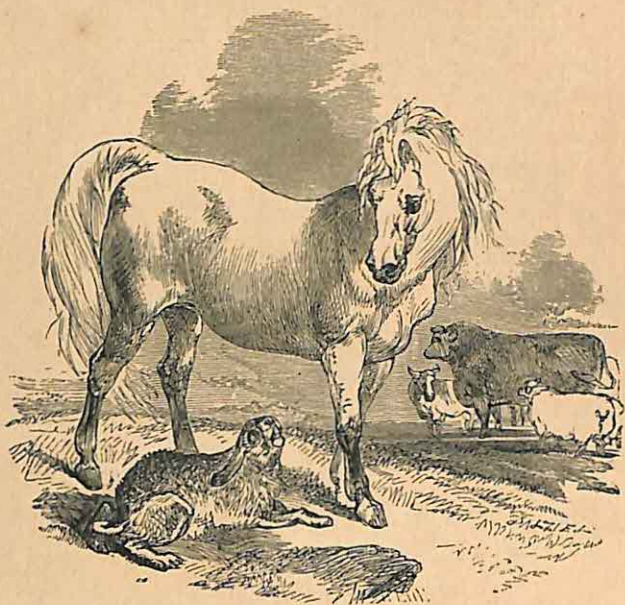
"What dignity's in human nature ?"
Says Man, the most conceited creature,
As from a cliff he casts his eye,
And view'd the sea and arch'd sky.
The sun was sunk beneath the main ;
The moon and all the starry train
Hung the vast vault of Heaven : the Man
His contemplation thus began :

"When I behold this glorious show,
And the wide watery world below,
The scaly people of the main,
The beasts that range the wood or plain,
The wing'd inhabitants of air,
The day, the night, the various year,
And know all these by Heaven design'd
As gifts to pleasure human-kind,
I cannot raise my worth too high ;
Of what vast consequence am I !"

"Not of th' importance you suppose,"
Replies a Flea upon his nose :

“ Be humble, learn thyself to scan ;
Know, pride was never made for man,
'Tis vanity that swells thy mind,
What, Heaven and earth for thee design'd !
For thee, made only for our need,
That more important Fleas might feed.”





FABLE L.

THE HARE AND MANY FRIENDS.

FRIENDSHIP, like love, is but a name,
Unless to one, you stint the flame.
The child, whom many fathers share,
Hath seldom known a father's care.
'Tis thus in friendships; who depend
On many, rarely find a friend.

A Hare who, in a civil way,
Complied with everything, like GAY,
Was known by all the bestial train
Who haunt the wood or graze the plain;

Her care was never to offend,
And every creature was her friend.

As forth she went, at early dawn,
To taste the dew-besprinkled lawn,
Behind, she hears the hunter's cries,
And from the deep-mouth'd thunder, flies:
She starts, she stops, she pants for breath;
She hears the near advance of death;
She doubles to mislead the hound,
And measures back her mazy round,
Till, fainting in the public way,
Half dead with fear, she gasping lay.

What transport in her bosom grew,
When first the Horse appear'd in view!

"Let me," says she, "your back ascend,
And owe my safety to a friend.
You know my feet betray my flight:
To friendship every burden's light."

The Horse replied, "Poor honest puss,
It grieves my heart to see thee thus:
Be comforted, relief is near,
For all your friends are in the rear."

She next the stately Bull implored;
And thus replied the mighty lord:
"Since every beast alive can tell
That I sincerely wish you well;
I may, without offence, pretend
To take the freedom of a friend.
Love calls me hence; a favourite cow
Expects me near yon barley-mow;
And when a lady's in the case,
You know all other things give place.

To leave you thus might seem unkind,
But see, the Goat is just behind."

The Goat remark'd her pulse was high,
Her languid head, her heavy eye:
"My back," says he, "may do you harm;
The Sheep's at hand, and wool is warm."

The Sheep was feeble, and complain'd
His sides a load of wool sustain'd;
Said he was slow; confess'd his fears;
For hounds eat sheep as well as Hares.

She now the trotting Calf address'd,
To save from death a friend distress'd:

"Shall I," says he, "of tender age,
In this important care engage?
Older and abler pass'd you by;
How strong are those! how weak am I!
Should I presume to bear you hence,
Those friends of mine may take offence.
Excuse me, then: you know my heart;
But dearest friends, alas! must part.
How shall we all lament! Adieu,
For see, the hounds are just in view."

¹ This Fable is the most natural and delightful of the whole set and is the most interesting, because Gay designed himself under the character of the *Hare*, for no man was ever more beloved, no man had more friends, and yet no man ever gained less by them than poor Gay. Hence Pope says of him, "Gay dies unpensioned with a hundred friends."—COXE.

In this, the most masterly of our poet's fables, and hence deservedly the most popular, he follows out the ramifications of human treachery, and shows how deceit is universally allied to cowardice, and hypocrisy to equivocation.—OWEN.

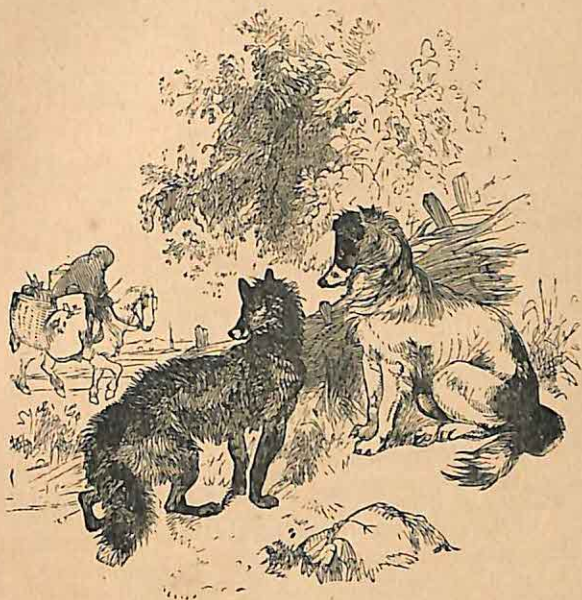


FABLES.

Second Series.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND SERIES.

THESE Fables were finished by Mr. Gay, and intended for the Press, a short time before his Death ; when they were left, with his other Papers, to the care of his noble Friend and Patron, the Duke of Queensberry. His Grace has accordingly permitted them to the Press, and they are here printed from the Originals in the Author's own Hand-writing. We hope they will please equally with his former Fables, though mostly on Subjects of a graver and more political turn : They will certainly shew Him to have been (what he esteemed the best Character) a Man of a truly honest Heart, and a sincere Lover of his Country.



FABLE I.

THE DOG AND THE FOX.

(TO A LAWYER.)

I KNOW you Lawyers can, with ease,
Twist words and meanings as you please ;
That language, by your skill made pliant,
Will bend to favour every client ;
That 'tis the fee directs the sense,
To make out either side's pretence.
When you peruse the clearest case,
You see it with a double face :

For scepticism is your profession ;
 You hold there's doubt in all expression.

Hence is the bar with fees supplied,
 Hence eloquence takes either side.
 Your hand would have but paltry gleanings,
 Could every man express his meaning.
 Who dares presume to pen a deed,
 Unless you previously are fee'd ?
 'Tis drawn ; and, to augment the cost,
 In dull prolixity engross'd.

And now we're well secured by law,
 Till the next brother find a flaw.

Read o'er a will. Was't ever known
 But you could make the will your own ?
 For when you read, 'tis with intent
 To find out meanings never meant.
 Since things are thus, *se defendendo*,¹
 I bar fallacious *innuendo*.²

Sagacious Porta's skill could trace³
 Some beast or bird in every face.
 The head, the eye, the nose's shape,
 Proved this an owl, and that an ape ;
 When, in the sketches thus design'd,
 Resemblance brings some friend to mind,
 You show the piece, and give the hint,
 And find each feature in the print ;
 So monstrous-like the portrait's found,
 All know it, and the laugh goes round.

¹ Law expressions. *Se defendendo*, to speak in his own defence, or to be advocate in his own cause.

² *I bar fallacious innuendo*, means, I except deceitful insinuations.

³ *Sagacious Porta*. Giovanni Baptista Porta was a great philosopher and mathematician, born at Naples 1540. The work alluded to by Gay is "*De Humana Physiognomonia*." Porta died 1615.

Like him I draw from general nature;
Is't I or you, then, fix the satire?—

So, Sir, I beg you spare your pains
In making comments on my strains.
All private slander I detest,
I judge not of my neighbour's breast:
Party and prejudice I hate,
And write no libels on the State.

Shall not my Fable censure vice,¹
Because a knave is over nice?
And, lest the guilty hear and dread,
Shall not the decalogue be read?
If I lash vice in general fiction,
Is't I apply, or self-conviction?
Brutes are my theme; am I to blame,
If men in morals are the same?
I no man call or ape or ass;
'Tis his own conscience holds the glass.
Thus void of all offence, I write:
Who claims the fable knows his right.

A shepherd's Dog, unskill'd in sports,
Pick'd up acquaintance of all sorts;
Among the rest, a Fox he knew:
By frequent chat, their friendship grew.

Says Reynard, "'Tis a cruel case,
That man should stigmatize our race.
No doubt, among us, rogues you find,
As among dogs and human kind;

¹ Gay has introduced a similar sentiment in the *Beggar's Opera*:—

"When you censure the age,
Be cautious and sage,
Lest the courtiers offended should be
If you mention vice or bribe,
'Tis so pat to all the tribe;
Each cries,—that was levell'd at me."

And yet (unknown to me and you)
There may be honest men and true.
Thus slander tries whate'er it can
To put us on the foot with man.
Let my own actions recommend;
No prejudice can blind a friend;
You know me free from all disguise;
My honour as my life, I prize."

By talk like this, from all mistrust
The Dog was cured, and thought him just.

As on a time the Fox held forth
On conscience, honesty, and worth,
Sudden he stopp'd; he cock'd his ear;
Low dropt his brushy tail with fear.

"Bless us! the hunters are abroad:
What's all that clatter on the road?"

"Hold," says the Dog, "we're safe from harm,
'Twas nothing but a false alarm:
At yonder town 'tis market day;
Some farmer's wife is on the way;
'Tis so; I know her piebald mare,
Dame Dobbins with her poultry-ware."

Reynard grew huff. Says he, "This sneer
From you I little thought to hear;
Your meaning in your looks I see:
Pray what's Dame Dobbins, friend, to me?
Did I e'er make her poultry thinner?
Prove that I owe the dame a dinner."

"Friend," quoth the Cur, "I meant no harm;
Then why so captious, why so warm?
My words, in common acceptation,
Could never give this provocation.

No lamb, for aught I ever knew,
May be more innocent than you.”
At this, gall'd Reynard winced, and swore
Such language ne'er was given before.

“What's lamb to me? this saucy hint
Shows me, base knave, which way you squint.
If t'other night your master lost
Three lambs, am I to pay the cost?
Your vile reflections would imply
That I'm the thief:—You Dog, you lie!”

“Thou knave, thou fool,” the Dog replied,
“The name is just, take either side;
Thy guilt these applications speak;
Sirrah, 'tis conscience makes you squeak.”

So saying, on the Fox he flies;
The self-convicted felon dies.





FABLE II.

THE VULTURE, THE SPARROW, AND OTHER BIRDS.

(TO A FRIEND IN THE COUNTRY.)

ERE I begin, I must premise
Our ministers are good and wise
So, though malicious tongues apply,
Pray what care they, or what care I?

If I am free with courts, be't known,
I ne'er presume to mean our own.
If general morals seem to joke
On ministers, and such-like folk,

A captious fool may take offence,
 What then? He knows his own pretence.¹
 I meddle with no State affairs,
 But spare my jest to save my ears.
 Our present schemes are too profound,
 For Machiavel himself, to sound;²
 To censure 'em I've no pretension,
 I own they're past my comprehension.
 You say, your brother wants a place,
 ('Tis many a younger brother's case,)
 And that he very soon intends
 To ply the court, and tease his friends.
 If there his merits chance to find
 A patriot of an open mind,
 Whose constant actions prove him just
 To both a king's and people's trust,
 May he, with gratitude, attend,
 And owe his rise to such a friend.
 You praise his parts, for business fit,
 His learning, probity, and wit;
 But those alone will never do,
 Unless his patron have 'em too.
 I've heard of times (pray God defend us!
 We're not so good but he can mend us)
 When wicked ministers have trod
 On kings and people, law and God;

¹ The word "pretence" is here used in the sense of "design" or "purpose," as in Shakespeare's *Gentlemen of Verona*, *Winter's Tale*, etc.—OWEN.

² Nicholas Machiavelli, a native of Florence, a famous writer of plays historical and other works. The work to which Gay alludes, is his "Prince," or treatise of politics, in which he describes, under the character of Cæsar Borgia, the arts of government, as they are too often practised by wicked princes and tyrants. See also Fable 5, line 45.
 In his "Rural Sports," Gay has also Machiavel for a politician:—

"Each rival Machiavel with envy burns,
 And honesty forsakes them all by turns."

With arrogance they girt the throne,
And knew no interest but their own.
Then virtue, from preferment barr'd,
Gets nothing, but its own reward.
A gang of petty knaves attend 'em,
With proper parts to recommend 'em.
Then if his patron burn with lust,
The first in favour's pimp the first.
His doors are never closed to spies,
Who cheer his heart with double lies;
They flatter him, his foes defame,
So lull the pangs of guilt and shame.
If schemes of lucre haunt his brain,
Projectors swell his greedy train:
Vile brokers ply his private ear
With jobs of plunder for the year;
All consciences must bend and ply;
You must vote on and not know why:
Through thick and thin you must go on;
One scruple, and your place is gone.

Since plagues like these have cursed a land,
And favourites cannot always stand,
Good courtiers should for change be ready,
And not have principles too steady;
For should a knave engross the power,
(God shield the realm from that sad hour!)
He must have rogues or slavish fools;
For what's a knave without his tools?

Wherever those a people drain,
And strut with infamy and gain,
I envy not their guilt and state,
And scorn to share the public hate.

Let their own servile creatures rise,
By screening fraud, and venting lies :
Give me, kind Heaven, a private station,
A mind serene for contemplation :
Title and profit I resign ;
The pos^t of honour shall be mine.
My Fable read, their merits view,
Then herd who will, with such a crew.

In days of yore (my cautious rhymes
Always except the present times)
A greedy Vulture, skill'd in game,
Inured to guilt, unawed by shame,
Approach'd the throne in evil hour,
And step by step intrudes to power :
When at the royal Eagle's ear,
He longs to ease the monarch's care.
The monarch grants. With pride elate,
Behold him minister of state !
Around him throng the feather'd rout ;
Friends must be served, and some must out ;
Each thinks his own the best pretension ;
This asks a place, and that a pension.

The Nightingale was set aside :
A forward Daw his room supplied.

" This bird," says he, " for business fit,
Hath both sagacity and wit :
With all his turns, and shifts, and tricks,
He's docile, and at nothing sticks :
Then with his neighbours one so free
At all times will connive at me."

The Hawk had due distinction shown,
For parts and talents like his own.

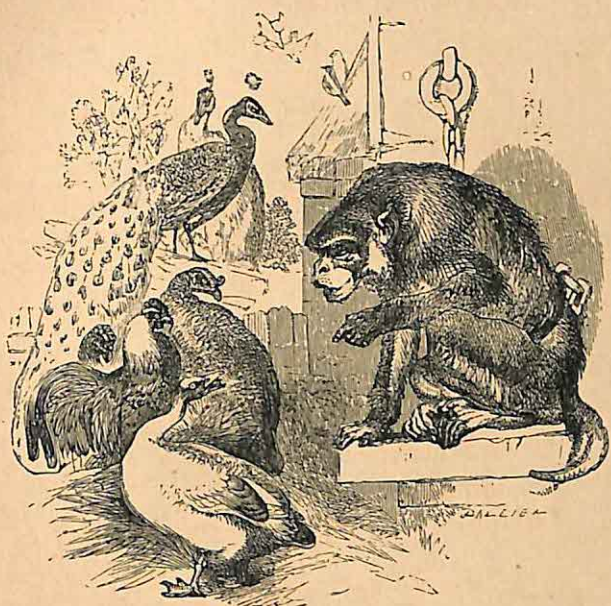
Thousands of hireling Cocks attend him,
As blustering bullies to defend him.

At once the Ravens were discarded,
And Magpies with their posts rewarded.

Those fowls of omen I detest,
That pry into another's nest.
State-lies must lose all good intent,
For they foresee and croak th' event.
My friends ne'er think, but talk by rote,
Speak what they're taught, and so to vote.

"When rogues like these," a Sparrow cries,
"To honours and employments rise,
I court no favour, ask no place,
For such preferment is disgrace.
Within my thatch'd retreat I find
(What these ne'er feel) true peace of mind."





FABLE III.

THE BABOON AND THE POULTRY.

(TO A LEVEE-HUNTER.)

WE frequently misplace esteem,
 By judging men by what they seem.
 To birth, wealth, power, we should allow
 Precedence, and our lowest bow :
 In that is due distinction shown ;
 Esteem is Virtue's right alone.

With partial eye we're apt to see
 The man of noble pedigree :

We're prepossess'd my Lord inherits,
In some degree, his grandsire's merits;
For those we find upon record,
But find him nothing but "my Lord."

When we, with superficial view,
Gaze on the rich, we're dazzled too,
We know that wealth, well understood,
Hath frequent power of doing good,
Then fancy that the thing is done;
As if the power and will were one.
Thus oft the cheated crowd adore
The thriving knaves that keep 'em poor.

The cringing train of power survey;
What creatures are so low as they!
With what obsequiousness they bend!
To what vile actions condescend!
Their rise is on their meanness built,
And flattery is their smallest guilt.
What homage, reverence, adoration,
In every age, in every nation,
Have sycophants, to power address'd!
No matter who the power possess'd.
Let ministers be what they will,
You find their levees always fill.
E'en those who have perplex'd a State,
Whose actions claim contempt and hate,
Had wretches to applaud their schemes,
Though more absurd than madmen's dreams.
When barbarous Moloch was invoked,
The blood of infants only smoked!¹

¹ In allusion to the sacrifices to Moloch, the principal idol of the Ammonites.

But here (unless all History lies)
Whole realms have been a sacrifice
Look through all courts: 'tis power we find
The general idol of mankind,
There worshipp'd under every shape:
Alike the lion, fox, and ape,
Are follow'd by time-serving slaves,
Rich prostitutes and needy knaves.

Who then shall glory in his post?
How frail his pride, how vain his boast!
The followers of his prosperous hour
Are as unstable as his power.
Power, by the breath of Flattery nurst,
The more it swells is nearer burst.
The bubble breaks, the gewgaw ends,
And in a dirty tear descends.

Once on a time, an ancient maid,
By wishes and by time decay'd
To cure the pangs of restless thought,
In birds and beasts amusement sought:
Dogs, parrots, apes, her hours employ'd;
With these alone she talk'd and toy'd.

A huge Baboon her fancy took,
(Almost a man in size and look)
He finger'd everything he found,
And mimic'd all the servants round.
Then, too, his parts and ready wit
Show'd him for every business fit.
With all these talents 'twas but just
That Pug should hold a place of trust;
So to her favourite was assign'd
The charge of all her feather'd kind.

'Twas his to tend 'em eve and morn,
And portion out their daily corn.

Behold him now, with haughty stride,
Assume a ministerial pride.

The morning rose. In hope of picking,
Swans, turkeys, peacocks, ducks, and chicken,
Fowls of all ranks surround his hut,
To worship his important strut.

The minister appears : the crowd,
Now here, now there, obsequious bow'd.
This praised his parts, and that his face,
T'other his dignity in place.

From bill to bill the flattery ran :
He hears and bears it like a man ;
For when we flatter Self-conceit,
We but his sentiments repeat.

If we're too scrupulously just,
What profit's in a place of trust ?
The common practice of the great
Is to secure a snug retreat :
So Pug began to turn his brain
(Like other folks in place) on gain.

An apple-woman's stall was near,
Well stock'd with fruits through all the year ;
Here every day he cramm'd his guts,
Hence were his hoards of pears and nuts ;
For 'twas agreed (in way of trade)
His payments should in corn be made.

The stock of grain was quickly spent,
And no account which way it went.
Then, too, the Poultry's starved condition
Caused speculations of suspicion.

The facts were proved beyond dispute,
Pug must refund his hoards of fruit,
And, though then minister in chief,
Was branded as a public thief.
Disgraced, despised, confined to chains,
He nothing but his pride retains.

A Goose pass'd by,—he knew the face,
Seen every levee while in place.

“What, no respect! no reverence shown!
How saucy are these creatures grown!
Not two days since,” says he, “you bow’d
The lowest of my fawning crowd.”

“Proud fool!” replies the Goose, “’tis true
Thy corn a fluttering levee drew;
For that I join’d the hungry train,
And sold thee flattery for thy grain.
But then, as now, conceited Ape,
We saw thee in thy proper shape.”





FABLE IV.

THE ANT IN OFFICE.

(TO A FRIEND.)

You tell me that you apprehend
My verse may touchy folks offend.
In prudence, too, you think my rhymes
Should never squint at courtiers' crimes;
For though nor this nor that is meant,
Can we another's thoughts prevent?

You ask me, if I ever knew
Court-chaplains thus, the lawn pursue?

I meddle not with gown or lawn ;
Poets, I grant, to rise, must fawn.
They know great ears are over nice,
And never shock their patron's vice.
But I this hackney path despise,
'Tis my ambition not to rise ;
If I must prostitute the Muse,
The base conditions I refuse.

I neither flatter nor defame,
Yet own I would bring guilt to shame.
If I Corruption's hand expose,
I make corrupted men my foes ;
What then ? I hate the paltry tribe :
Be virtue mine ; be theirs the bribe.
I no man's property invade ;
Corruption's yet no lawful trade.
Nor would it mighty ills produce,
Could I shame bribery out of use.
I know 'twould cramp most politicians,
Were they tied down to these conditions :
'Twould stint their power, their riches bound,
And make their parts seem less profound.
Were they denied their proper tools,
How could they lead their knaves and fools ?
Were this the case, let's take a view
What dreadful mischiefs would ensue.
Though it might aggrandize the State,
Could private luxury dine on plate ?
Kings might indeed their friends reward,
But ministers find less regard.
Informers, sycophants, and spies,
Would not augment the year's supplies.

Perhaps, too, take away this prop,
An annual job or two, might drop.
Besides, if pensions were denied,
Could Avarice support its pride?
It might even ministers confound,
And yet the State be safe and sound.

I care not though 'tis understood,
I only mean my country's good :
And (let who will my freedom blame)
I wish all courtiers did the same ;
Nay, though some folks the less might get,
I wish the nation out of debt.
I put no private man's ambition
With public good in competition :
Rather than have our laws defaced,
I'd vote a minister disgraced.

I strike at vice, be't where it will ;
And what if great folks take it ill ?
I hope corruption, bribery, pension,
One may with detestation mention ;
Think you the law (let who will take it)
Can *scandalum magnatum* make it ?
I vent no slander, owe no grudge,
Nor of another's conscience, judge.
At him, or him, I take no aim,
Yet dare against all vice declaim.
Shall I not censure breach of trust,
Because knaves know themselves unjust ?
That steward whose account is clear,
Demands his honour may appear,
His actions never shun the light,
He is, and would be proved, upright.

But then you think my Fable bears
Allusion, too, to State affairs.

I grant it does: and who's so great,
That has the privilege to cheat?

If then in any future reign
(For ministers may thirst for gain)
Corrupted hands defraud the nation,
I bar no reader's application.

An Ant there was, whose forward prate
Controll'd all matters in debate;
Whether he knew the thing or no,
His tongue eternally would go.
For he had impudence at will,
And boasted universal skill,
Ambition was his point in view:
Thus by degrees to power he grew.
Behold him now his drift attain,
He's made chief-treasurer of the grain.

• But as their ancient laws are just,
And punish breach of public trust,
'Tis order'd (lest wrong application
Should starve that wise industrious nation)
That all accounts be stated clear,
Their stock, and what defray'd the year;
That auditors shall these inspect,
And public rapine thus be check'd.
For this the solemn day was set;
The auditors in council met.
The granary-keeper must explain,
And balance his account of grain.
He brought (since he could not refuse 'em)
Some scraps of paper to amuse 'em.

An honest Pismire, warm with zeal,
In justice to the public weal,
Thus spoke:—"The nation's hoard is low;
From whence does this profusion flow?
I know our annual fund's amount;
Why such expense? and where's th' account?"

With wonted arrogance and pride,
The Ant in office thus replied:
"Consider, Sirs, were secrets told,
How could the best-schemed projects hold?
Should we State-mysteries disclose,
'Twould lay us open to our foes.
My duty and my well-known zeal
Bid me our present schemes conceal.
But, on my honour, all th' expense
(Though vast) was for the swarm's defence."
They pass'd th' account as fair and just;
And voted him implicit trust.

Next year again the granary drain'd,
He thus his innocence maintain'd;

"Think how our present matters stand,
What dangers threat from every hand;
What hosts of turkeys stroll for food,
No farmer's wife but hath her brood.
Consider, when invasion's near,
Intelligence must cost us dear;
And, in this ticklish situation,
A secret told betrays the nation:
But on my honour, all the expense
(Though vast) was for the swarm's defence."

Again, without examination,
They thank'd his sage administration.

The year revolves. Their treasure spent,
Again in secret service went :
His honour, too, again was pledged,
To satisfy the charge alleged.

When thus, with panic shame possess'd,
An auditor, his friends address'd :

“ What are we ? ministerial tools ?
We little knaves are greater fools.
At last this secret is explored,
'Tis our corruption thins the hoard.
For every grain we touch'd, at least,
A thousand, his own heaps, increased.
Then for his kin and favourite spies,
A hundred hardly could suffice.
Thus for a paltry sneaking bribe,
We cheat ourselves and all the tribe ;
For all the magazine contains,
Grows from our annual toil and pains.”

They vote th' account shall be inspected :
The cunning plunderer is detected ;
The fraud is sentenced ; and his hoard,
As due, to public use restored.





FABLE V.

THE BEAR IN A BOAT.

(TO A COXCOMB.)

THAT man must daily wiser grow,
Whose search is bent, himself to know.
Impartially he weighs his scope,
And on firm reason founds his hope ;
He tries his strength before the race,
And never seeks his own disgrace ;
He knows the compass, sail, and oar,
Or never launches from the shore ;

Before he builds, computes the cost,
And in no proud pursuit is lost ;
He learns the bounds of human sense,
And safely walks within the fence.
Thus, conscious of his own defect,
Are pride and self-importance check'd.

If, then, self-knowledge to pursue,
Direct our life in every view,
Of all the fools that pride can boast,
A Coxcomb claims distinction most.

Coxcombs are of all ranks and kind ;
They're not to sex or age confined,
Or rich or poor, or great or small,
And vanity besets them all.
By ignorance is pride increased ;
Those most assume who know the least ;
Their own false balance gives them weight,
But every other finds them light.

Not that all Coxcombs' follies strike,
And draw our ridicule alike.
To different merits each pretends.
This in love-vanity transcends ;
That smitten with his face and shape,
By dress distinguishes the ape ;
T'other with learning crams his shelf,
Knows books, and all things but himself.

All these are fools of low condition,
Compared with Coxcombs of ambition ;
For those, puff'd up with flattery, dare
Assume a nation's various care.
They ne'er the grossest praise mistrust,
Their sycophants seem hardly just ;

For these, in part alone, attest
The flattery their own thoughts suggest.
In this wide sphere, a Coxcomb's shown
In other realms besides his own :
The self-deem'd Machiavel at large
By turns controls in every charge.
Does Commerce suffer in her rights,
'Tis he directs the naval flights.
What sailor dares dispute his skill ?
He'll be an admiral when he will.

Now, meddling in the soldier's trade,
Troops must be hir'd, and levies made :
He gives ambassadors their cue,
His cobbled treaties to renew ;
And annual taxes must suffice
The current blunders to disguise.
When his crude schemes in air are lost,
And millions scarce defray the cost,
His arrogance (nought undismay'd),
Trusting in self-sufficient aid,
On other rocks misguides the realm,
And thinks a pilot at the helm.
He ne'er suspects his want of skill,
But blunders on from ill to ill ;
And when he fails of all intent,
Blames only unforeseen event.
Lest you mistake the application,
The Fable calls me to relation.

A Bear of shag and manners rough,
At climbing trees expert enough—
For dext'rously, and safe from harm,
Year after year he robb'd the swarm ;

Thus thriving on industrious toil,
He gloried in his pilfer'd spoil.

This trick so swell'd him with conceit,
He thought no enterprise too great.

Alike in sciences and arts

He boasted universal parts.

Pragmatic, busy, bustling, bold,

His arrogance was uncontroll'd :

And thus he made his party good,

And grew—dictator of the wood.

The beasts with admiration stare,
And think him a prodigious Bear.

Were any common booty got,

'Twas his, each portion to allot :

For why ? he found there might be picking,

E'en in the carving of a chicken.

Intruding thus, he by degrees

Claim'd, too, the butcher's larger fees.

And now his overwhelming pride

In every province will preside :

No task too difficult was found,

His blundering nose misleads the hound,

In stratagem and subtle arts

He overrules the fox's parts.

It chanced as, on a certain day,

Along the bank he took his way,

A boat, with rudder, sail, and oar,

At anchor floated near the shore.

He stopt, and turning to his train,

Thus pertly vents his vaunting strain :

“What blundering puppies are mankind,

In every science always blind !

I mock the pedantry of schools :
What are their compasses and rules ?
From me, that helm shall conduct learn,
And man, his ignorance discern."

So saying, with audacious pride
He gains the boat, and climbs the side.
The beasts, astonish'd, line the strand ;
The anchor's weigh'd ; he drives from land.
The slack sail shifts from side to side ;
The boat untrimm'd admits the tide ;
Borne down, adrift, at random tost,
His oar breaks short, the rudder's lost.
The Bear, presuming in his skill,
Is here, and there, officious still ;
Till, striking on the dangerous sands,
Aground the shatter'd vessel stands.

To see the bungler thus distress—
The very fishes, sneer and jest ;
E'en gudgeons join in ridicule,
To mortify the meddling fool.
The clamorous watermen appear—
Threats, curses, oaths, insult his ear :
Seized, thrash'd, and chain'd, he's dragg'd to land ;
Derision shouts along the strand.





FABLE VI.

THE SQUIRE AND HIS CUR.

(TO A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.)

THE man of pure and simple heart
Through life disdains a double part
He never needs the screen of lies
His inward bosom to disguise.
In vain malicious tongues assail,
Let Envy snarl, let Slander rail;
From Virtue's shield (secure from wound)
Their blunted, venom'd shafts rebound.

So shines his light before mankind,
His actions prove his honest mind.
If in his country's cause he rise,
Debating senates to advise,
Unbribed, unawed, he dares impart
The honest dictates of his heart.
No ministerial frown he fears,
But in his virtue perseveres.

But would you play the politician,
Whose heart's av'nt to intuition,
Your lips at all tift, away, your reason,
Must be controll'd at, the and season.
What statesman could in his star support
Were lying tongues forbid's court?
Did princely ears to truth attend,
What minister could gain his end?
How could he raise his tools to place,
And how his honest foes, disgrace?

That politician tops his part,
Who readily can lie with art:
The man's proficient in his trade;
His power is strong, his fortune's made.
By that, the interest of the throne
Is made subservient to his own:
By that, have kings of old, deluded,
All their own friends for his, excluded:
By that, his selfish schemes pursuing,
He thrives upon the public ruin.

Antiochus, with hardy pace,
Provoked the dangers of the chase
And, lost from all his menial train,
Traversed the wood, and pathless plain.

A cottage lodged the royal guest,
The Parthian clown brought forth his best ;
The King, unknown, his feast enjoy'd,
And various chat, the hours employ'd.
From wine what sudden friendship springs !
Frankly they talk'd of courts and kings.

“ We country-folks,” the Clown replies,
“ Could ope our gracious monarch's eyes.
The King, (as all our neighbours say)
Might he (God bless him!) have his way,
Is sound at heart, and means our good,
And he would do it, if he could.

If truth in courts were not forbid,
Nor kings nor subjects, would be rid.
Were he in power we need not doubt him
But that transferr'd to those about him,
On them he throws the regal cares ;
And what mind they ? Their own affairs.

If such rapacious hands he trust,
The best of men may seem unjust.
From kings to cobblers 'tis the same ;
Bad servants wound their masters' fame,
In this our neighbours all agree :
Would the king knew as much as we ! ”
Here he stopt short. Repose they sought ;
The Peasant slept, the Monarch thought.

The courtiers learn'd, at early dawn,
Where their lost sovereign was withdrawn.
The guards' approach our host alarms ;
With gaudy coats the cottage swarms ;
The crown and purple robes they bring,
And prostrate fall before the King.

The Clown was call'd; the royal guest
By due reward his thanks exprest.
The King then, turning to the crowd,
Who fawningly before him bow'd,
Thus spoke: "Since, bent on private gain,
Your counsels first misled my reign,
Taught and inform'd by you alone,
No truth the royal ear hath known,
Till here conversing—hence, ye crew!
For now I know myself and you."

Whene'er the royal ear's engrost,
State-lies but little genius cost;
The favourite then securely robs,
And gleans a nation by his jobs.
Franker and bolder grown in ill,
He daily poisons dares instil;
And, as his present views suggest,
Inflames or soothes the royal breast:
Thus wicked ministers oppress,
When oft the monarch means redress.

Would kings their private subjects hear.
A minister must talk with fear;
If honesty opposed his views,
He dared not innocence accuse;
'Twould keep him in such narrow bound,
He could not right and wrong confound.
Happy were kings, could they disclose
Their real friends and real foes!
Were both themselves and subjects known,
A monarch's will might be his own:
Had he the use of ears and eyes,
Knaves would no more be counted wise.

But then a minister might lose
(Hard case!) his own ambitious views.
When such as these have vex'd a state,
Pursued by universal hate,
Their false support at once hath fail'd,
And persevering truth prevail'd.
Exposed, their train of fraud is seen—
Truth will at last remove the screen.

A Country Squire, by whim directed,
The true stanch dogs of chase neglected;
Beneath his board no hound was fed,
His hand ne'er stroked the spaniel's head.
A snappish Cur, alone carest,
By lies had banish'd all the rest:
Yap had his ear, and defamation
Gave him full scope of conversation.
His sycophants must be prefer'd,
Room must be made for all his herd:
Wherefore, to bring his schemes about,
Old faithful servants all must out.

The Cur on every creature flew,
(As other great men's puppies do,)
Unless due court to him were shown,
And both their face and business known,
No honest tongue an audience found—
He worried all the tenants round.
For why? he lived in constant fear,
Lest truth by chance should interfere.
If any stranger dared intrude,
The noisy Cur his heels pursued;
Now fierce with rage, now struck with dread
At once he snarl'd, bit, and fled.

Aloof he bays, with bristling hair,
And thus in secret growls his fear :
“ Who knows but Truth, in this disguise,
May frustrate my best-guarded lies ?
Should she (thus mask'd) admittance find,
That very hour, my ruin's sign'd.”

Now in his howl's continued sound,
Their words were lost, their voice was drown'd.
Ever in awe of honest tongues,
Thus every day he strain'd his lungs.

It happen'd, in ill-omen'd hour,
That Yap, unmindful of his power,
Forsook his post, to love inclin'd,
A favourite bitch was in the wind.
By her seduced, in amorous play,
They frisk'd the joyous hours away :
Thus by untimely love pursuing,
Like Antony he sought his ruin.

For now the Squire, unvex'd with noise,
An honest neighbour's chat, enjoys.

“ Be free,” says he, “ your mind impart ;
I love a friendly open heart.

Methinks my tenants shun my gate ;
Why such a stranger grown of late ?
Pray tell me what offence they find—
’Tis plain they're not so well inclined.”

“ Turn off your Cur,” the Farmer cries,
“ Who feeds your ear with daily lies.
His snarling insolence offends,—
’Tis he that keeps you from your friends.
Were but that saucy puppy checkt,
You'd find again the same respect.

Hear only him, he'll swear it too,
That all our hatred is to you:
But learn from us your true estate—
'Tis that curst Cur alone, we hate."

The Squire heard Truth. Now Yap rushed in,
The wide hall echoes with his din,
Yet Truth prevail'd; and, with disgrace
The dog was cudgell'd out of place.





FABLE VII.

THE COUNTRYMAN AND JUPITER.

(TO MYSELF.)

HAVE you a friend (look round and spy)
So fond, so prepossess'd as I?
Your faults, so obvious to mankind,
My partial eyes could never find.
When, by the breath of Fortune blown,
Your airy castles were o'erthrown,
Have I been ever prone to blame,
Or mortified your hours with shame?
Was I e'er known to damp your spirit,
Or twit you with the want of merit?

'Tis not so strange that Fortune's frown
Still perseveres to keep you down :
Look round, and see what others do.
Would you be rich and honest too ?
Have you (like those she raised to place)
Been opportunely, mean and base ?
Have you, (as times required), resign'd
Truth, honour, virtue, peace of mind ?
If these are scruples, give her o'er ;
Write, practise morals, and be poor.

The gifts of Fortune truly rate ;
Then, tell me what would mend your state.
If happiness on wealth were built,
Rich rogues might comfort find, in guilt.
As grows the miser's hoarded store,
His fears, his wants, increase the more.

Think, GAY, (what ne'er may be the case,)
Should Fortune take you into grace,
Would that your happiness augment ?
What can she give beyond content ?

Suppose yourself a wealthy heir,
With a vast annual income clear !
In all the affluence you possess,
You might not feel one care the less.
Might you not, then, like others, find
With change of fortune, change of mind ?
Perhaps, profuse beyond all rule
You might start out a glaring fool ;
Your luxury might break all bounds ;
Plate, table, horses, stewards, hounds,
Might swell your debts ; then, lust of play
No regal income can defray.

Sunk is all credit, writs assail,
And doom your future life to jail.

Or were you dignified with power,
Would that avert one pensive hour?
You might give avarice its swing,
Defraud a nation, blind a king;
Then from the hirelings in your cause,
Though daily fed with false applause,
Could it a real joy impart?—
Great guilt knew never joy at heart.

Is happiness your point in view?
(I mean th' intrinsic and the true).
She nor in camps nor courts, resides,
Nor in the humble cottage, hides;
Yet found alike in every sphere—
Who finds content, will find her there.¹

O'erspent with toil, beneath the shade,
A Peasant rested on his spade:
“Good gods!” he cries, “’tis hard to bear
This load of life from year to year!
Soon as the morning streaks the skies
Industrious Labour bids me rise;

¹ It has been justly remarked, that a writer often best describes the excellence of that virtue in which he is most deficient; and can most feelingly paint the miseries of that state which he himself has experienced.

Thus Steele, who suffered so much from want of economy, wrote admirably upon economy; and Gay, whose sanguine disposition was continually forming hopes which were continually disappointed, who was ever sighing for what he had not, and not enjoying what he had, has, in many parts of his Fables, but particularly in this beautiful introduction, displayed in just colours, the blessedness of a contented mind.

This Fable shows, from the example of the discontented Countryman, who found by experience that his own situation was preferable to those which he envied, what a false estimate they make of life, who are silly enough, as Gay says in another place:—

— “by outward show,
To judge of happiness below.”—FABLE XLIX.

With sweat I earn my homely fare,
And every day renews my care."

Jove heard the discontented strain,
And thus rebuked the murmuring swain:

"Speak out your wants, then, honest friend:
Unjust complaints, the gods offend.

If you repine at partial Fate,
Instruct me what could mend your state.
Mankind in every station see—

What wish you? tell me what you'd be."

So said, upborne upon a cloud,
The Clown survey'd the anxious crowd.

"Yon face of Care," says Jove, "behold,
His bulky bags are fill'd with gold:

See with what joy he counts it o'er!
That sum to-day hath swell'd his store."

"Were I that man," the Peasant cried,
"What blessing could I ask beside?"

"Hold," says the god, "first learn to know
True happiness from outward show.

This optic glass of intuition—
Here, take it; view his true condition."

He look'd, and saw the miser's breast
A troubled ocean, ne'er at rest;

Want ever stares him in the face,
And fear anticipates disgrace.

With conscious guilt he saw him start,
Extortion gnaws his throbbing heart,

And never, or in thought or dream,
And never, or in thought or dream,
One happy gleam.

His breast admit, he cries, "reject my pray'r,
"May Jove,"

And guard my life from guilt and care!

My soul abhors that wretch's fate—

Oh keep me in my humble state!

But see, amidst a gaudy crowd,

Yon minister so gay and proud;

On him what happiness attends,

Who thus rewards his grateful friends!"

"First take the glass," the god replies;

"Man views the world with partial eyes."

"Good gods!" exclaims the startled wight,

"Defend me from this hideous sight:

Corruption, with corrosive smart,

Lies cankering on his guilty heart.

I see him with polluted hand

Spread the contagion o'er the land.

Now Avarice with insatiate jaws,

Now Rapine with her harpy claws,

His bosom tears; his conscious breast

Groans, with a load of crimes oppress.

I see him, mad and drunk with power,

Stand tottering on Ambition's tower.

Sometimes, in speeches vain and proud,

His boasts insult the nether crowd;

Now, seized with giddiness and fear,

He trembles lest his fall is near.

Was ever wretch like this?" he cries,

"Such misery in such disguise!

The change, O Jove! I disavow—

Still be my lot the spade and plough."

He next, confirm'd by speculation,

Rejects the lawyer's occupation;

For he the statesman seem'd in part,

And bore similitude of heart.

Nor did the soldier's trade inflame
His hopes, with thirst of spoil and fame :
The miseries of war he mourn'd,
Whole nations into deserts turn'd.

By these have laws and rights been braved ;
By these was free-born man enslaved :
When battles and invasion cease,
Why swarm they in the lands of peace ?
"Such change," says he, "may I decline—
The scythe, and civil arms, be mine !"

Thus, weighing life in each condition,
The Clown withdrew his rash petition.

When thus the god : "How mortals err !
If you true happiness prefer ;
'Tis to no rank of life confined,
But dwells in every honest mind.
Be justice, then, your sole pursuit—
Plant virtue, and content's the fruit."
So, Jove, to gratify the Clown,
Where first he found him, set him down.





FABLE VIII.

THE MAN, THE CAT, THE DOG, AND THE FLY.

(TO MY NATIVE COUNTRY.)

HAIL, happy land! whose fertile grounds
 The liquid fence of Neptune bounds;¹
 By beauteous nature set apart,
 The seat of Industry and Art.
 O Britain! chosen port of trade,
 May luxury ne'er thy sons invade!
 May never minister (intent
 His private treasures to augment)

¹ *The liquid fence of Neptune bounds*, may be compared with Waller's "Sea-girt Britain" and Rowe's "The noblest of the ocean's isles."

Corrupt thy state! If jealous foes
Thy rights of commerce dare oppose,
Shall not thy fleets their rapine awe?
Who is't prescribes the ocean law?

Whenever neighbouring states contend,
'Tis thine to be the general friend,
What is't who rules in other lands?
On trade alone thy glory stands:
That benefit is unconfined,
Diffusing good among mankind:
That first gave lustre to thy reigns,
And scatter'd plenty o'er thy plains:
'Tis that alone thy wealth supplies,
And draws all Europe's envious eyes.
Be commerce, then, thy sole design—
Keep that, and all the world is thine.

When naval traffic ploughs the main,
Who shares not in the merchant's gain?
'Tis that supports the regal state,
And makes the farmer's heart elate:
The numerous flocks that clothe the land
Can scarce supply the loom's demand;
Prolific culture glads the fields,
And the bare heath, a harvest yields.

Nature expects mankind should share¹
The duties of the public care.
Who's born for sloth? To some we find
The ploughshare's annual toil assign'd;

¹ Lines 33 to 64. These beautiful lines inculcate the necessity of industry, and the reciprocal advantages drawn from the inequality of conditions, according to the observation in the forty-third Fable:

"Since ev'ry creature was decreed,
To aid each other's mental need."

Some at the sounding anvil glow ;
Some the swift-sliding shuttle throw ;
Some studious of the wind and tide,
From pole to pole, our commerce guide ;
Some (taught by industry) impart
With hands and feet, the works of art ;
While some, of genius more refined,
With head and tongue, assist mankind :
Each aiming at one common end,
Proves to the whole, a needful friend.
Thus, born each other's useful aid,
By turns, are obligations paid.

The monarch, when his table's spread,
Is to the clown, obliged for bread ;
And when in all his glory, drest,
Owes to the loom, his royal vest.
Do not the mason's toil and care,
Protect him from th' inclement air ?
Does not the cutler's art supply
The ornament, that guards his thigh ?
All these, in duty to the throne,
Their common obligations, own.
'Tis he (his own and people's cause)
Protects their properties and laws :
Thus they their honest toil employ,
And with content, the fruits enjoy.
In every rank, or great or small,
'Tis industry supports us all.

The animals, by want oppress'd,
To man their services address'd ;
While each pursued their selfish good,
They hunger'd for precarious food :

Their hours with anxious cares were vext,
One day they fed, and starved the next.
They saw that plenty, sure and rife,
Was found alone in social life;
That mutual industry profess'd,
The various wants of man, redress'd.

The Cat, half-famished, lean, and weak,
Demands the privilege to speak.

"Well, Puss," says Man, "and what can you
To benefit the public, do?"

The Cat replies: "These teeth, these claws,
With vigilance shall serve the cause.
The mouse, destroy'd by my pursuit,
No longer shall your feasts pollute;
Nor rats, from nightly ambuscade,
With wasteful teeth, your stores invade."

"I grant," says Man, "to general use
Your parts and talents may conduce;
For rats and mice purloin our grain,
And threshers whirl the flail, in vain:
Thus shall the Cat, a foe to spoil,
Protect the farmer's honest toil."

Then turning to the Dog, he cried,
"Well, Sir, be next your merits tried."
"Sir," says the Dog, "by self-applause
We seem to own a friendless cause.
Ask those who know me, if distrust
E'er found me treacherous or unjust?
Did I e'er faith or friendship break?
Ask all those creatures, let them speak.
My vigilance and trusty zeal
Perhaps might serve the public weal.

Might not your flocks in safety feed,
Were I to guard the fleecy breed ?
Did I the nightly watches keep,
Could thieves invade you, while you sleep ?”

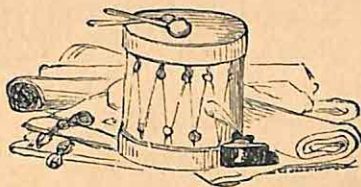
The Man replies ; “ ’Tis just and right,
Rewards, such service, should requite.
So rare, in property, we find
Trust uncorrupt, among mankind,
That, taken in a public view,
The first distinction is your due.
Such merits all reward transcend :
Be then my comrade and my friend.”

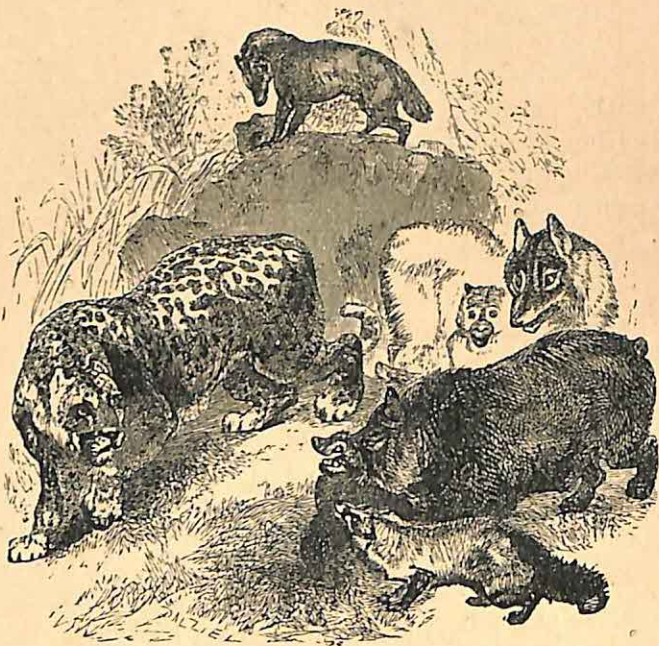
Addressing now the Fly : “ From you
What public service can accrue ? ”
“ From me ! ” the fluttering insect said,
“ I thought you knew me better bred.
Sir, I’m a gentleman. Is’t fit
That I to industry submit ?
Let mean mechanics, to be fed,
By business, earn ignoble bread :
Lost in excess of daily joys,
No thought, no care, my life annoys.
At noon (the lady’s matin hour),
I sip the tea’s delicious flower ;
On cates luxuriously I dine,
And drink the fragrance of the vine.
Studios of elegance and ease,
Myself alone, I seek to please.”

The Man, his pert conceit, derides,
And thus the useless coxcomb, chides :
“ Hence from that peach, that downy seat—
No idle fool deserves to eat.

Could you have sapp'd the blushing rind,
 And on that pulp ambrosial, dined,
 Had not some hand, with skill and toil
 To raise the tree, prepared the soil?
 Consider, sot, what would ensue,
 Were all such worthless things, as you.
 You'd soon be forced (by hunger stung),
 To make your dirty meals on dung,
 On which such despicable need,
 Unpitied, is reduced to feed.
 Besides, vain, selfish, insect, learn
 (If you can right and wrong discern),
 That he who, with industrious zeal,
 Contributes to the public weal,
 By adding to the common good.
 His own, hath rightly understood."

So saying, with a sudden blow,
 He laid the noxious vagrant low,
 Crush'd in his luxury and pride,
 The spunger on the public, died.





FABLE IX.

THE JACKAL, LEOPARD, AND OTHER BEASTS.

(TO A MODERN POLITICIAN.)

I GRANT corruption sways mankind ;
That interest, too, perverts the mind ;
That bribes have blinded common sense,
Foil'd reason, truth, and eloquence ;
I grant you, too, our present crimes
Can equal those of former times.
Against plain facts shall I engage,
To vindicate our righteous age ?

I know that in a modern fist,
 Bribes, in full energy, subsist.
 Since then these arguments prevail,
 And itching palms are still so frail,
 Hence politicians, you suggest,
 Should drive the nail that goes the best ;
 That it shows parts and penetration,
 To ply men with the right temptation.

To this I humbly must dissent,
 Premising, no reflection's meant.

Does justice, or the client's sense,
 Teach lawyers, either side's defence ?
 The fee gives eloquence its spirit,
 That only is the client's merit.
 Does art, wit, wisdom, or address,
 Obtain the prostitute's caress ?
 The guinea (as in other trades),
 From every hand, alike persuades.
 "Man," Scripture says, "is prone to evil ;"
 But does that vindicate the devil ?
 Besides, the more mankind are prone,
 The less the devil's parts are shown.
 Corruption's not of modern date ;
 It hath been tried in every state.
 Great knaves of old their power have fenced,
 By places, pensions, bribes, dispensed ;
 By these they gloried in success,
 And impudently dared oppress ;
 By these despotic'ly they sway'd,
 And slaves extoll'd the hand that paid ;
 Nor parts nor genius were employ'd—
 By these alone were realms destroy'd.

Now see these wretches in disgrace,
Stript of their treasures, power, and place ;
View 'em abandon'd and forlorn,
Exposed to just reproach and scorn.
What now is all your pride, your boast ?
Where are your slaves, your flattering host ?
What tongues now feed you with applause ?
Where are the champions of your cause ?
Now e'en that very fawning train,
Which shared the gleanings of your gain,
Press foremost who shall first accuse
Your selfish jobs, your paltry views,
Your narrow schemes, your breach of trust,
And want of talents to be just.

What fools were these amidst their power !
How thoughtless of their adverse hour !
What friends were made ? A hireling herd,
For temporary votes preferr'd.
Was it these sycophants to get,
Your bounty swell'd a nation's debt ?
You're bit, for these, like Swiss, attend—
No longer pay, no longer friend.

The lion is (beyond dispute)
Allow'd the most majestic brute ;
His valour and his generous mind
Prove him superior of his kind :
Yet to jackals (as 'tis averr'd)
Some lions have their power transferr'd,
As if the parts of pimps and spies
To govern forests could suffice.

Once, studious of his private good,
A proud Jackal oppress'd the wood ;

To cram his own insatiate jaws,
 Invaded property and laws.
 The forest groans with discontent,
 Fresh wrongs the general hate, foment.
 The spreading murmurs reach'd his ear;
 His secret hours were vex'd with fear."
 Night after night he weighs the case,
 And feels the terrors of disgrace.

"By friends," says he, "I'll guard my seat,
 By those, malicious tongues defeat;
 I'll strengthen power by new allies,
 And all my clamorous foes despise."

To make the generous beasts his friends,
 He cringes, fawns, and condescends;
 But those repulsed his abject court,
 And scorn'd oppression to support.
 Friends must be had, he can't subsist—
 Bribes shall new proselytes enlist.
 But these, nought weigh'd in honest paws;
 For bribes, confess a wicked cause:
 Yet think not every paw withstands
 What hath prevail'd in human hands.

A tempting turnip's silver skin
 Drew a base Hog through thick and thin:
 Bought with a Stag's delicious haunch,
 The mercenary Wolf was staunch:
 The convert Fox grew warm and hearty,
 A pullet gain'd him to the party:
 The golden pippin in his fist,
 A chattering Monkey join'd the list.

But soon, exposed to public hate,
 The favourite's fall redress'd the state.

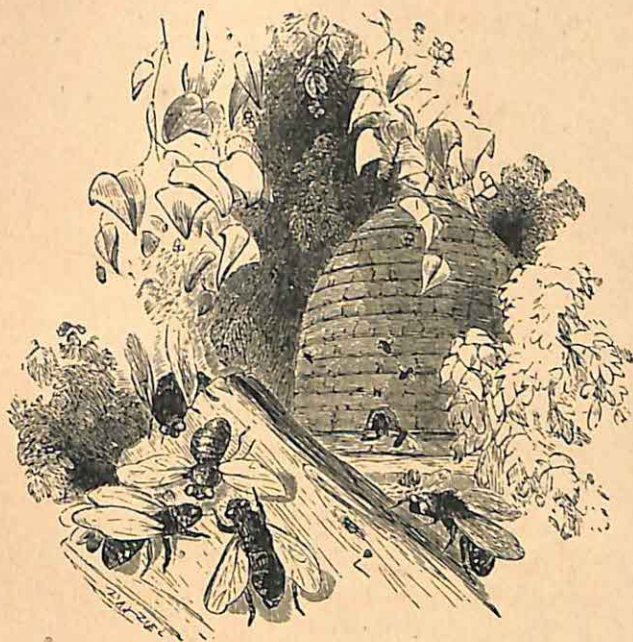
The Leopard, vindicating right,
Had brought his secret frauds to light.
As rats, before the mansion falls,
Desert late hospitable walls,
In shoals the servile creatures run,
To bow before the rising sun.

The Hog with warmth express'd his zeal,
And was for hanging those that steal;
But hoped, though low, the public hoard
Might half a turnip still afford.

Since saving measures were profest,
A lamb's head was the Wolf's request.
The Fox submitted, if to touch
A gosling would be deem'd too much?
The Monkey thought his grin and chatter,
Might ask a nut, or some such matter.

"Ye hirelings, hence!" the Leopard cries,
"Your venal conscience I despise:
He who the public good intends,
By bribes needs never purchase friends.
Who acts this just, this open part,
Is propt by every honest heart.
Corruption now too late has show'd
That bribes are always ill-bestowed:
By you, your bubbled master's taught,
Time-serving tools, not friends, are bought."





FABLE X.

THE DEGENERATE BEES.

TO THE REV. DR. SWIFT, DEAN OF ST. PATRICK'S.

THOUGH courts the practice disallow,
A friend at all times I'll avow.
In politics I know 'tis wrong—
A friendship may be kept too long;
And what they call the prudent part,
Is to wear interest next the heart:
As the times take a different face,
Old friendships should to new, give place.

I know, too, you have many foes ;
That owning you, is sharing those ;
That every knave in every station,
Of high and low denomination,
For what you speak, and what you write,
Dread you at once, and bear you spite.
Such freedoms in your works are shown,
They can't enjoy what's not their own,
All dunces, too, in church and state,
In frothy nonsense show their hate ;
With all the petty scribbling crew,
(And those pert sots are not a few,)
'Gainst you and Pope, their envy spurt :
The booksellers alone are hurt.

Good gods ! by what a powerful race
(For blockheads may have power and place)
Are scandals raised, and libels writ,
To prove your honesty and wit !
Think with yourself : those worthy men,
You know, have suffer'd by your pen :
From them you've nothing but your due.
From hence, 'tis plain, your friends are few,
Except myself, I know of none,
Besides the wise and good alone.
To set the case in fairer light,
My Fable shall the rest recite,
Which (though unlike our present state)
I, for the moral's sake, relate.

A Bee of cunning, not of parts,
Luxurious, negligent of arts,
Rapacious, arrogant, and vain,
Greedy of power, but more of gain,—

Corruption sow'd throughout the hive :
By petty rogues, the great ones thrive.

As power and wealth his views supplied,
'Twas seen in overbearing pride. "

With him, loud impudence had merit ;
The Bee of conscience wanted spirit ;
And those who follow'd honour's rules,
Were laugh'd to scorn, for squeamish fools.
Wealth claim'd distinction, favour, grace,
And poverty alone, was base.

He treated industry with slight,
Unless he found his profit by't.
Rights, laws, and liberties, gave way,
To bring his selfish schemes in play.
The swarm forgot the common toil,
To share the gleanings of his spoil.

" While vulgar souls, of narrow parts,
Waste life in low mechanic arts ;
Let us," says he, " to genius born,
The drudgery of our fathers scorn.
The Wasp and Drone, you must agree,
Live with more elegance, than we.
Like gentlemen, they sport and play ;
No business interrupts the day :
Their hours to luxury, they give,
And nobly on their neighbours live."

A stubborn Bee, among the swarm,
With honest indignation warm,
Thus from his cell with zeal replied :

" I slight thy frowns, and hate thy pride.
The laws our native rights protect ;
Offending thee, I those respect.

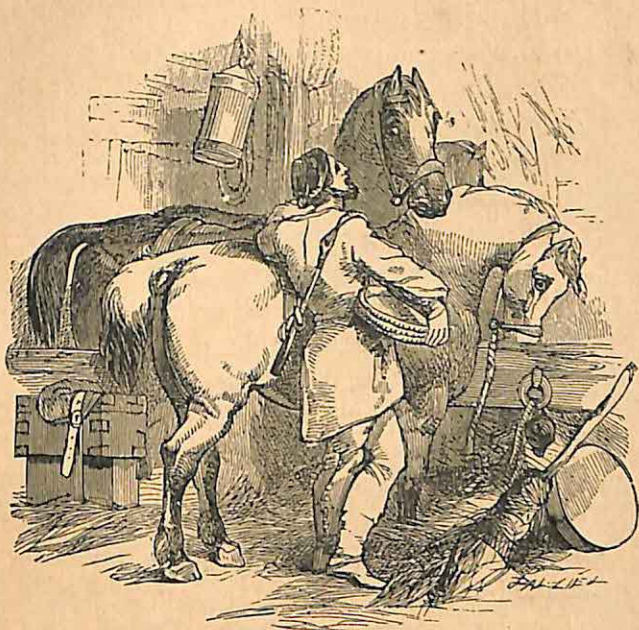
Shall luxury corrupt the hive,
 And none against the torrent strive?
 Exert the honour of your race;
 He builds his rise on your disgrace.
 'Tis industry our state maintains;
 'Twas honest toil and honest gains
 That raised our sires to power and fame—
 Be virtuous; save yourselves from shame.
 Know that in selfish ends pursuing,
 You scramble for the public ruin."

He spoke; and, from his cell dismiss'd,
 Was insolently scoff'd and hiss'd:
 With him a friend or two resign'd,
 Disdaining the degenerate kind.

"These Drones," says he, "these insects vile,
 (I treat 'em in their proper style)
 May, for a time, oppress the state:
 They own our virtue by their hate.
 By that, our merits they reveal,
 And recommend our public zeal;
 Disgraced by this corrupted crew,
 We're honour'd by the virtuous few."¹

¹ A galaxy of glorious intellect, not only surrounded Swift with the radiance of talent, but warmed him with the glow of friendship. Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, Sheridan, appear to have loved him in spite of his moroseness, and almost for his very weaknesses, whilst a whole country honoured "The Drapier" for his inflexible courage, and exposure of court injustice. Swift's letters are redolent of the very essence of friendship.—OWEN.

This Fable is dedicated to Swift, who was Dean of St. Patrick's. Swift was greatly attached to Gay, and strongly recommended him to Oxford and Bolingbroke, during their administration. Gay never forgot his obligations to those who had served him, and has, in many parts of his works, as well as in this Fable, paid a tribute of gratitude to Swift.



FABLE XI.

THE PACK-HORSE AND THE CARRIER.

(TO A YOUNG NOBLEMAN.)

BEGIN, my Lord, in early youth,
To suffer, nay, encourage truth ;
And blame me not for disrespect,
If I the flatterer's style reject ;
With that, by menial tongues supplied,
You're daily cocker'd up in pride.

The tree's distinguish'd by the fruit ;
Be virtue, then, your first pursuit.

Set your great ancestors in view,
Like them deserve the title too;
Like them, ignoble actions scorn;
Let virtue prove you greatly born.

Though with less plate their sideboard shone,
Their conscience always was their own;
They ne'er at levees meanly fawn'd,,
Nor was their honour yearly pawn'd:
Their hands, by no corruption stain'd,
The ministerial bribe, disdain'd.
They served the crown with loyal zeal,
Yet, jealous of the public weal,
They stood, the bulwark of our laws,
And wore at heart, their country's cause.
By neither place nor pension bought,
They spoke and voted as they thought;
Thus did your sires adorn their seat,
And such alone are truly great.

If you the paths of learning slight,
You're but a dunce in stronger light.
In foremost rank, the coward placed,
Is more conspicuously disgraced.
If you, to serve a paltry end,
To knavish jobs can condescend,
We pay you the contempt that's due;
In that, you have precedence too.

Whence had you this illustrious name?
From virtue and unblemish'd fame.
By birth the name alone descends;
Your honour on yourself depends:
Think not your coronet can hide
Assuming ignorance and pride.

Learning by study must be won,
'Twas ne'er entail'd from son to son ;
Superior worth your rank requires,
For that, mankind reveres your sires :
If you degenerate from your race,
Their merits heighten your disgrace.

A Carrier, every night and morn,
Would see his horses eat their corn :
This sunk the hostler's vails, 'tis true,
But then his horses had their due.
Were we so cautious in all cases,
Small gain would rise from greater places.

The manger now had all its measure ;
He heard the grinding teeth with pleasure,
When all at once confusion rung—
They snorted, jostled, bit, and flung.
A pack-horse turn'd his head aside,
Foaming, his eyeballs swell'd with pride.

" Good gods !" says he, " how hard's my lot !
Is then my high descent forgot ?
Reduced to drudgery and disgrace,
(A life unworthy of my race)
Must I, too, bear the vile attacks
Of ragged scrubs and vulgar hacks ?
See scurvy Roan, that brute ill-bred,
Dares from the manger, thrust my head !
Shall I, who boast a noble line,
On offals of these creatures, dine !
Kick'd by old Ball ! so mean a foe !
My honour suffers by the blow.
Newmarket speaks my grandsire's fame,
All jockeys still revere his name ;

There, yearly, are his triumphs told,
 There all his massy plates enroll'd.
 Whene'er led forth upon the plain,
 You saw him with a livery train:
 Returning, too, with laurels crown'd,
 You heard the drums and trumpets sound.
 Let it then, Sir, be understood,
 Respect's my due, for I have blood."
 "Vain-glorious fool!" the Carrier cried.
 "Respect was never paid to pride.
 Know 'twas thy giddy wilful heart
 Reduced thee to this slavish part.
 Did not thy headstrong youth disdain
 To learn the conduct of the rein?
 Thus coxcombs, blind to real merit,
 In vicious frolics, fancy spirit.
 What is't to me by whom begot,
 Thou restive, pert, conceited sot?
 Your sires I reverence—'tis their due,
 But, worthless fool, what's that to you?
 Ask all the Carriers on the road,
 They'll say thy keeping's ill bestow'd.
 Then vaunt no more thy noble race,
 That neither mends thy strength nor pace.
 What profits me, thy boast of blood?
 An ass hath more intrinsic good.
 By outward show let's not be cheated;
 An ass, should, like an ass, be treated."¹

¹ This Fable strongly inculcates the truth, that learning and virtue are not, like honours, hereditary: and that high birth and elevated stations, when misapplied and degenerated, only serve to render bad conduct more conspicuous, and vice more hideous. As GAY justly observes:—

"In foremost ranks, the coward placed,
 Is more conspicuously disgrace."



FABLE XII.

PAN AND FORTUNE.

(TO A YOUNG HEIR.)

SOON as your father's death was known
(As if th' estate had been their own),
The gamesters outwardly exprest
The decent joy within your breast :
So lavish in your praise they grew,
As spoke their certain hopes in you.
One counts your income of the year,
How much in ready money clear.

"No house," says he, "is more complete,
The garden's elegant and great.
How fine the park around it lies!
The timber's of a noble size!
Then count his jewels and his plate!
Besides, 'tis no entail'd estate.
If cash run low, his lands in fee
Are, or for sale or mortgage, free."

Thus they, before you threw the main,
Seem to anticipate their gain.

Would you, when thieves are known abroad,
Bring forth your treasures in the road?
Would not the fool abet the stealth,
Who rashly thus exposed his wealth?
Yet this you do whene'er you play
Among the gentlemen of prey?

Could fools to keep their own, contrive,
On what, on whom, could gamesters thrive?
Is it in charity, you game,
To save your worthy gang from shame?
Unless you furnish'd daily bread,
Which way could idleness be fed?
Could these professors of deceit,
Within the law, no longer cheat,
They must run bolder risks for prey,
And strip the traveller on the way.
Thus in your annual rents they share,
And 'scape the noose from year to year.

Consider, e'er you make the bet,
That sum might cross your tailor's debt;
When you the pilfering rattle shake,
Is not your honour, too, at stake?

Must you not, by mean lies, evade
To-morrow's duns from every trade?
By promises so often paid,
Is yet your tailor's bill defray'd?
Must you not pitifully fawn
To have your butcher's writ withdrawn?
This must be done. In debts of play,
Your honour suffers no delay;
And not this year's and next year's rent
The sons of Rapine can content.

Look round; the wrecks of play behold;
Estates dismember'd, mortgaged, sold!
Their owners now to jails confined,
Show equal poverty of mind.
Some, who the spoil of knaves were made,
Too late attempt to learn their trade.
Some, for the folly of one hour,
Become the dirty tools of power,
And, with the mercenary list,
Upon court charity subsist.

You'll find at last this maxim true—
Fools are the game which knaves pursue.

The forest (a whole century's shade),
Must be one wasteful ruin made:
No mercy's shown to age or kind—
The general massacre is sign'd.
The park, too, shares the dreadful fate;
For duns grow louder at the gate.
Stern clowns, obedient to the squire
(What will not barbarous hands for hire?)
With brawny arms repeat the stroke;
Fall'n are the elm and reverend oak.

Through the long wood, loud axes sound,
And Echo groans with every wound.

To see the desolation spread,
Pan drops a tear, and hangs his head :
His bosom now with fury burns,
Beneath his hoof, the dice he spurns,
Cards, too, in peevish passion torn,
The sport of whirling winds are borne.

"To snails, inveterate hate I bear,
Who spoil the verdure of the year :
The caterpillar I detest,
The blooming Spring's voracious pest ;
The locust, too, whose ravenous band
Spreads sudden famine o'er the land ;
But what are these ? The dice's throw
At once hath laid a forest low.¹
The cards are dealt, the bet is made,
And the wide park hath lost its shade.
Thus is my kingdom's pride defaced,
And all its ancient glories waste.
All this," he cries, "is Fortune's doing ;
'Tis thus she meditates my ruin.
By Fortune, that false, fickle jade !
More havoc in one hour is made,
Than all the hungry insect-race,
Combined, can in an age deface."

Fortune, by chance, who near him past,
O'erheard the vile aspersion cast :

"Why, Pan," says she, "what's all this rant ?
'Tis every country-bubble's cant.

¹ Smith, the author of "Gaieties and Gravities," defines dice "Playthings which the devil sets in motion, when he wants a new supply of knaves, beggars, and suicides."—OWEN.

Am I the patroness of vice ?
 Is't I who cog or palm the dice ?¹
 Did I the shuffling art reveal,
 To mark the cards, or range the deal ?
 In all th' employments men pursue,
 I mind the least, what gamesters do.
 There may (if computation's just)
 One, now and then, my conduct trust.
 I blame the fool, for what can I,
 When ninety-nine, my power defy ?
 • These trust alone, their fingers' ends,
 And not one stake, on me, depends.
 Whene'er the gaming-board is set,
 Two classes of mankind are met ;
 But if we count the greedy race,
 The knaves, fill up the greater space.
 'Tis a gross error, held in schools,
 • That Fortune always favours fools.
 In play, it never bears dispute :
 That doctrine, these fell'd oaks confute.
 Then why to me, such rancour show ?
 • 'Tis Folly, Pan, that is thy foe,
 By me, his late estate he won,
 But he by Folly, was undone."

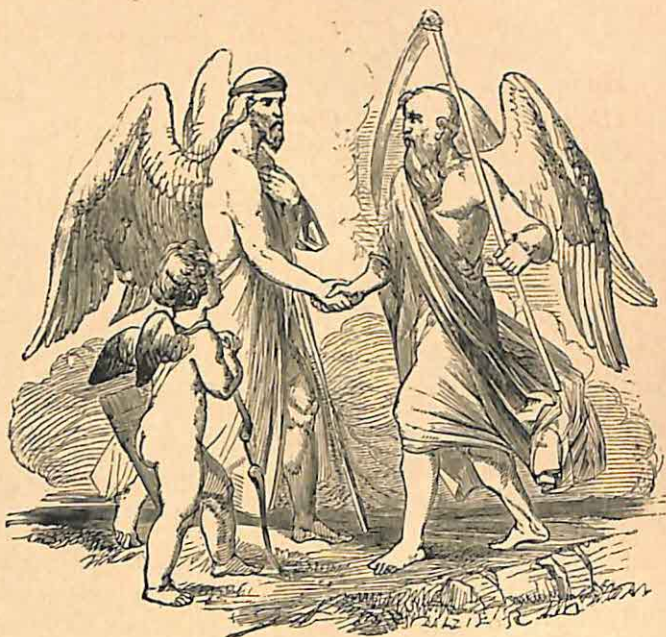
¹ To *cog the dice* means to load them with a small bit of lead, by which means one particular number is often thrown.

To *palm the dice* means to convey them under the palm of the hand and substitute others in their stead. As Prior says:—

"They *palm'd* the trick that lost the game."

Gay also, in his "Newgate's Garland,"

"The gallants of Newgate, whose fingers are nice,
 In diving in pockets, and *cogging of dice*."



FABLE XIII.

PLUTUS, CUPID, AND TIME.

OF all the burdens man must bear,
Time, seems most galling and severe :
Beneath this grievous load oppress'd,
We daily meet some friend distress'd.

“What can one do ? I rose at nine :
’Tis full six hours before we dine :
Six hours ! no earthly thing to do !
Would I had dozed in bed till two.”

A pamphlet is before him spread,
And almost half a page is read ;
Tired with the study of the day,
The fluttering sheets are toss’d away ;

He opes his snuff-box, hums an air,
Then yawns, and stretches in his chair.

"Not twenty, by the minute hand!
Good gods!" says he, "my watch must stand!
How muddling 'tis on books to pore!
I thought I'd read an hour or more.
The morning, of all hours, I hate:
One can't contrive to rise too late."

To make the minutes faster run,
Then, too, his tiresome self to shun,
To the next coffee-house he speeds,
Takes up the news—some scraps he reads.
Sauntering from chair to chair, he trails;
Now drinks his tea, now bites his nails.
He spies a partner of his woe,
By chat, afflictions lighter grow;
Each other's grievances they share,
And thus their dreadful hours compare.

Says Tom, "Since all men must confess
That time lies heavy, more or less,
Why should it be so hard to get,
Till two, a party at piquet?
Play might relieve the lagging morn:
By cards, long wintry nights are borne.
Does not quadrille amuse the fair,¹
Night after night, throughout the year?

¹ When Gay wrote his Fable, Quadrille was the most fashionable game, in vogue.* He has written a Ballad on Quadrille, which thus begins:—

"When as corruption hence did go,
And left the nation free;
When ay said ay, and no said no,
Without or place or fee;
Then Satan, thinking things went ill,
Sent forth his spirit, call'd *Quadrille*.
Quadrille, Quadrille, Quadrille!"

* It should be noted that the Quadrille referred to was a game of cards and not the popular dance of the same name.

Vapours and spleen forgot, at play
They cheat uncounted hours away."

"My case," says Will, "then must be hard,
By want of skill from play debarr'd.
Courtiers kill time by various ways;
Dependance wears out half their days.
How happy these, whose time ne'er stands!
Attendance takes it off their hands.
Were it not for this cursed shower,
The Park had whiled away an hour.
At court, without or place or view,
I daily lose an hour or two,
It fully answers my design,
When I have pick'd up friends to dine;
The tavern makes our burden light—
Wine puts our time and care to flight.
At six (hard case!) they call to pay.
Where can one go? I hate the play.
From six till ten! unless in sleep,
One cannot spend the hours so cheap.
The comedy's no sooner done
But some assembly is begun;
Loitering from room to room I stray,
Converse, but nothing hear or say:
Quite tired, from fair to fair I roam—
So soon! I dread the thoughts of home.
From thence, to quicken slow-paced Night,
Again my tavern-friends invite:
Here, too, our early mornings pass,
Till drowsy sleep retards the glass."

Thus they their wretched life bemoan,
And make each other's case, their own.

Consider, friends, no hour rolls on
But something of your grief is gone.
Were you to schemes of business bred,
Did you the paths of learning tread,
Your hours, your days would fly too fast;
You'd then regret the minute past.
Time's fugitive and light as wind!
'Tis indolence that clogs your mind.
That load from off your spirits shake,
You'll own and grieve for your mistake.
Awhile, your thoughtless spleen suspend,
Then read, and (if you can) attend.

As Plutus, to divert his care,
Walk'd forth one morn to take the air,
Cupid o'ertook his strutting pace.
Each stared upon the stranger's face,
Till recollection set them right,
For each knew t'other but by sight.
After some complimentary talk,
Time met them, bow'd, and join'd their walk:
Their chat on various subjects ran,
But most, what each had done for man.
Plutus assumes a haughty air,
Just like our purse-proud fellows here:

"Let kings," says he, "let cobblers tell,
Whose gifts among mankind excel,
Consider courts; what draws their train?
Think you 'tis loyalty or gain?
That statesman hath the strongest hold,
Whose tool of politics is gold.
By that, in former reigns, 'tis said,
The knave in power hath senates led:

By that alone, he sway'd debates,
Enrich'd himself, and beggar'd states.
Forego your boast. You must conclude
That's most esteem'd, that's most pursued.
Think, too, in what a woful plight
That wretch must live whose pocket's light.
Are not his hours by want deprest?
Penurious care corrodes his breast:
Without respect, or love, or friends,
His solitary day descends."

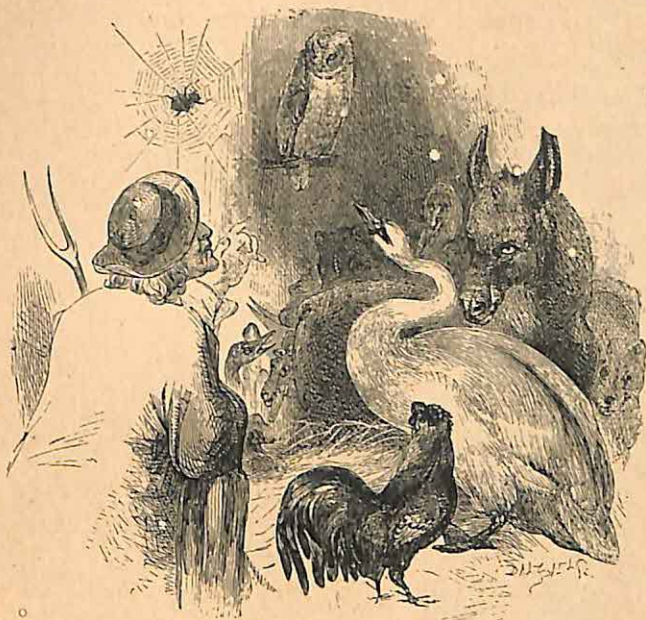
"You might," says Cupid, "doubt my parts.
My knowledge, too, in human hearts,
Should I the power of gold dispute,
Which great examples might confute.
I know, when nothing else prevails
Persuasive money seldom fails;
That beauty, too, (like other wares,)
Its price, as well as conscience, bears.
Then marriage (as of late profess'd)
Is but a money-job at best.
Consent, compliance, may be sold;
But love's beyond the price of gold.
Smugglers there are who, by retail,
Expose what they call love to sale;
Such bargains are an arrant cheat:
You purchase flattery and deceit.
Those who true love have ever tried,
(The common cares of life supplied,)
No wants endure, no wishes make,
But every real joy partake.
All comfort, on themselves, depends;
They want nor power, nor wealth, nor friends.

Love, then, hath every bliss in store ;
'Tis friendship, and 'tis something more.
Each other every wish they give :
Not to know love, is not to live."

"Or love, or money," Time replied,
"Were men the question to decide,
Would bear the prize : on both intent,
My boon's neglected or mis-spent.
'Tis I who measure vital space,
And deal out years to human race.
Though little prized, and seldom sought,
Without me, love and gold are nought.
How does the miser time employ ?
Did I e'er see him life enjoy ?
By me, forsook, the hoards he won
Are scatter'd by his lavish son.
By me, all useful arts are gain'd ;
Wealth, learning, wisdom, is attain'd.
Who, then, would think (since such my power),
That e'er I knew an idle hour ?
So subtle and so swift I fly,
Love's not more fugitive than I.
Who hath not heard coquettes complain
Of days, months, years, mis-spent in vain ?
For time misused, they pine and waste,
And love's sweet pleasures never taste.
Those who direct their time aright,
If love or wealth their hopes excite,
In each pursuit, fit hours employ'd,
And both by Time have been enjoy'd.
How heedless, then, are mortals grown ;
How little is their interest known !

In every view they ought to mind me,
For when once lost, they never find me."
He spoke. The gods no more contest,
And his superior gift confest,
That Time (when truly understood)
Is the most precious earthly good.





FABLE XIV.

THE OWL, THE SWAN, THE COCK, THE SPIDER, THE ASS,
AND THE FARMER.

(TO A MOTHER)

CONVERSING with your sprightly boys,
Your eyes have spoke the Mother's joys.
With what delight I've heard you quote
Their sayings in imperfect note !

I grant, in body and in mind
Nature appears profusely kind.

Trust not to that. Act you your part ;
Imprint just morals on their heart ;¹
Impartially their talents scan :
Just education forms the man.

Perhaps (their genius yet unknown)
Each lot of life's already thrown ;
That this shall plead, the next shall fight,
The last assert the church's right.
I censure not the fond intent ;
But how precarious is th' event !
By talents misapplied and crost,
Consider, all your sons are lost.

One day (the tale's by Martial penn'd)
A Father thus address'd his friend :
" To train my boy, and call forth sense,
You know I've stuck at no expense.
I've tried him in the several arts
(The lad, no doubt, hath latent parts) ;
Yet trying all, he nothing knows,
But, crab-like, rather backward goes,
Teach me what yet remains undone—
'Tis your advice shall fix my son."
" Sir," says the friend, " I've weigh'd the matter
Excuse me, for I scorn to flatter :
Make him (nor think his genius check'd)
A herald, or an architect."

Perhaps (as commonly 'tis known)
He heard th' advice, and took his own.

¹ The frequent references to classical authors and subjects as made in this and other Fables of Gay shows the familiarity of our author with ancient writers. We do not consider it necessary to comment in this place upon these varied topics, as most readers of these Fables will have a fair knowledge of the classics.

The boy wants wit ; he's sent to school,
 Where learning but improves the fool :
 The college next must give him parts,
 And cram him with the liberal arts.
 Whether he blunders at the bar,
 Or owes his infamy to war,
 Or if by licence or degree
 The sexton share the doctor's fee ;
 Or from the pulpit by the hour
 He weekly floods of nonsense pour,
 We find (th' intent of Nature foil'd)
 A tailor or a butcher spoil'd.

Thus ministers have royal boons
 Conferr'd on blockheads and buffoons ;
 In spite of nature, merit, wit,
 Their friends for every post were fit.

But now let every Muse confess
 That merit finds its due success.
 Th' examples of our days regard ;
 Where's virtue seen without reward ?
 Distinguish'd, and in place, you find
 Desert and worth of every kind.
 Survey the reverend bench, and see
 Religion, learning, piety :
 The patron, ere he recommends,
 See his own image in his friend's.
 Is honesty disgraced and poor ?¹
 What is't to us what was before ?

¹ The moral of this Fable is founded upon the supposition that children are born with a genius for some particular pursuit, as the swan is calculated for the water, the game-cock for fighting, the spider for spinning, and that some, like the ass, are incapable of improvement, but are stamped blockheads from their cradle. It is not necessary to pursue the subject further.

We all of times corrupt have heard.
When paltry minions were preferr'd;
When all great offices, by dozens,
Were fill'd by brothers, sons, and cousins.
What matter ignorance and pride?
The man was happily allied.
Provided that his clerk was good,
What though he nothing understood?
In church and state, the sorry race
Grew more conspicuous fools, in place.
Such heads, as then, a treaty made,
Had bungled in the cobbler's trade.

Consider, patrons, that such elves
Expose your folly with themselves.
'Tis yours, as 'tis the parent's care,
To fix each genius in its sphere.
Your partial hand can wealth dispense,
But never give a blockhead sense.

An Owl of magisterial air,
Of solemn voice, of brow austere,
Assumed the pride of human race,
And bore his wisdom in his face;
Not to depreciate learned eyes,
I've seen a pedant look as wise.

Within a barn, from noise retired,
He scorn'd the world, himself admired;
And, like an ancient sage, conceal'd
The follies public life reveal'd.

Philosophers of old, he read,
Their country's youth to science bred;
Their manners form'd for every station,
And destined each his occupation.

When Xenophon, by numbers braved,
 Retreated, and a people saved,
 That laurel was not all his own ;
 The plant by Socrates was sown.
 To Aristotle's greater name
 The Macedonian owed his fame.

The Athenian bird, with pride replete,
 Their talents equall'd in conceit ;
 And, copying the Socratic rule,
 Set up for master of a school.
 Dogmatic jargon learnt by heart,
 Trite sentences, hard terms of art,
 To vulgar ears seem'd so profound,
 They fancied learning in the sound.

The school had fame ; the crowded place
 With pupils swarm'd of every race.
 With these the Swan's maternal care
 Had sent her scarce-fledged cygnet heir ;
 The Hen (though fond and loth to part)
 Here lodged the darling of her heart ;
 The Spider, of mechanic kind,
 Aspired to science more refined ;
 The Ass learnt metaphors and tropes,
 But most on music fix'd his hopes.

The pupils now, advanced in age,
 Were call'd to tread life's busy stage ;
 And to the Master 'twas submitted,
 That each might to his part be fitted.

"The Swan," says he, "in arms shall shine ;
 The soldier's glorious toil be thine.
 The Cock shall mighty wealth attain—
 Go, seek it on the stormy main.

The court shall be the Spider's sphere :
 Power, fortune, shall reward him there.
 In music's art the Ass's fame
 Shall emulate Corelli's name."¹

Each took the part that he advised,
 And all were equally despised.
 A Farmer, at his folly moved,
 The dull preceptor thus reproved :

"Blockhead," says he, "by what you've done,
 One would have thought 'em each your son ;
 For parents, to their offspring blind,
 Consult nor parts nor turn of mind,
 But e'en in infancy decree
 What this, what t'other son shall be.
 Had you with judgment weigh'd the case,
 Their genius thus had fix'd their place ;
 The Swan had learnt the sailor's art ;
 The Cock had play'd the soldier's part ;
 The Spider in the weaver's trade
 With credit had a fortune made ;
 But for the fool, in every class
 The blockhead had appear'd an Ass."

¹ Corelli was a famous musician, who died at Rome in 1713. He seems to have been a favourite with Gay, for he speaks of him in his Epistle to William Pulteney, Esq., musician:—
 "Mentions the force of learn'd Corelli's notes."



FABLE XV.

THE COOK-MAID, THE TURNSPIT, AND THE OX.

(TO A POOR MAN.)

CONSIDER man in every sphere,
Then tell me, is your lot severe ?
'Tis murmur, discontent, distrust,
That makes you wretched. God is just !

I grant that hunger must be fed,
That toil, too, earns thy daily bread.
What then ? Thy wants are seen and known,
But every mortal feels his own.

We're born a restless, needy crew :
Show me the happier man than you.

Adam, though blest above his kind,
For want of social woman, pined.
Eve's wants the subtle serpent saw—
Her fickle taste transgress'd the law :
Thus fell our sires, and their disgrace,
The curse entail'd on human race.

When Philip's son, by glory led,
Had, o'er the globe, his empire spread ;
When altars to his name were dress'd,
That he was man, his tears confess'd.

The hopes of avarice are check'd :
The proud man always wants respect.
What various wants on power attend !
Ambition never gains its end.
Who hath not heard the rich complain
Of surfeits and corporeal pain ?
He, barr'd from every use of wealth,
Envies the ploughman's strength and health.
Another, in a beauteous wife
Finds all the miseries of life :
Domestic jars and jealous fear
Imbitter all his days with care.
This wants an heir--the line is lost :
Why was that vain entail engross'd ?
Canst thou discern another's mind ?
What is't you envy ? Envy's blind,
Tell Envy, when she would annoy,
That thousands want what you enjoy.

"The dinner must be dish'd at one.
Where's this vexatious Turnspit gone ?

Unless the skulking Cur is caught,
 The sirloin's spoil'd, and I'm in fault."
 Thus said, (for sure you'll think it fit
 That I the Cook-maid's oaths omit,)
 With all the fury of a cook,
 Her cooler kitchen, Nan forsook.
 The broomstick o'er her head she waves;
 She sweats, she stamps, she puffs, she raves,
 The sneaking Cur before her flies,
 She whistles, calls, fair speech she tries:
 These nought avail. Her choler burns;
 The fist and cudgel threat by turns:
 With hasty stride she presses near;
 He slinks aloof, and howls with fear.

"Was ever Cur so cursed!" he cried;
 "What star did at my birth preside!
 Am I for life by compact bound
 To tread the wheel's eternal round?
 Inglorious task! of all our race
 No slave is half so mean and base.
 Had Fate a kinder lot assign'd,
 And form'd me of the lap-dog kind,
 I then, in higher life employ'd,
 Had indolence and ease enjoy'd;
 And, like a gentleman, caress'd,
 Had been the lady's favourite guest.
 Or were I sprung from spaniel line,
 Was his sagacious nostril mine,
 By me, their never-erring guide,
 From wood and plain their feasts supplied,
 Knights, squires, attendant on my pace,
 Had shared the pleasures of the chase.

Endued with native strength and fire,
Why call'd I not the lion, sire ?
A lion ! such mean views I scorn—
Why was I not of woman born ?
Who dares with reason's power contend ?
On man, we^abrutal slaves, depend :
To him, all creatures, tribute pay,
And luxury employs his day."

An Ox by chance o'erheard his moan,
And thus rebuked the lazy drone :

"Dare you at partial Fate repine ?
How kind's your lot compared with mine !
Decreed to toil, the barbarous knife
Hath sever'd me from social life ;
Urged by the stimulating goad,
I drag the cumbrous waggon's load.
'Tis mine to tame the stubborn plain
Break the stiff soil, and house the grain ;
Yet I without a murmur bear
The various labours of the year.
But then, consider, that one day
(Perhaps the hour's not far away)
You, by the duties of your post,
Shall turn the spit when I'm the roast ;
And for reward shall share the feast—
I mean shall pick my bones at least."

"Till now," th' astonish'd Cur replies,
"I look'd on all with envious eyes.
How false we judge by what appears !
All creatures feel their several cares.
If thus yon mighty beast complains,
Perhaps man knows superior pains."

Let envy, then, no more torment :
Think on the Ox, and learn content."
Thus said, close following at her heel,
With cheerful heart he mounts the wheel.¹

¹ The moral of this Fable is contained in the third and fourth lines of the opening verse:—

" 'Tis murmur, discontent distrust,
That makes you wretched : God is just "—
an observation often admitted, seldom retained.

Gay, in another Fable, exhorts us:—

" Appease your discontented mind,
And act the part by Heaven assign'd."





FABLE XVI.

THE RAVENS, THE SEXTON, AND THE EARTH-WORM.

(TO LAURA.)

LAURA, methinks you're over nice,
True, flattery is a shocking vice ;
Yet sure, whene'er the praise is just,
One may commend without disgust.
Am I a privilege denied,
Indulged by every tongue beside ?
How singular are all your ways !
A woman, and averse to praise !

If 'tis offence such truths to tell,
Why do your merits thus excel?

Since then, I dare not speak my mind,
A truth conspicuous to mankind;
Though in full lustre every grace
Distinguish your celestial face;
Though beauties of inferior ray
(Like stars before the orb of day)
Turn pale and fade; I check my lays,
Admiring, what I dare not praise,

If you the tribute due, disdain,
The Muse's mortifying strain
Shall, like a woman in mere spite,
Set beauty in a moral light.

Though such revenge might shock the ear
Of many a celebrated fair,
I mean that superficial race
Whose thoughts ne'er reach beyond their face,
What's that to you? I but displease
Such ever-girlish ears as these.
Virtue can brook the thoughts of age,
That lasts the same through every stage.
Though you by time must suffer more
Than ever woman lost before,
To age is such indifference shown,
As if your face were not your own.
Were you by Antoninus taught?
Or is it native strength of thought
That thus, without concern or fright,
You view yourself by Reason's light?

Those eyes, of so divine a ray,
What are they? mouldering, mortal clay.

Those features, cast in heavenly mould,
Shall, like my coarser earth, grow old;
Like common grass, the fairest flower
Must feel the hoary season's power.

How weak, how vain is human pride!
Dares man upon himself confide!
The wretch who glories in his gain,
Amasses heaps on heaps in vain.
Why lose we life in anxious cares,
To lay in hoards for future years?
Can those (when tortured by disease)
Cheer our sick heart, or purchase ease?
Can those prolong one gasp of breath,
Or calm the troubled hour of death?

What's beauty? Call ye that your own?—
A flower that fades as soon as blown.
What's man, in all his boast of sway?
Perhaps the tyrant of a day.

Alike the laws of life take place
Through every branch of human race:
The monarch of long regal line
Was raised from dust as frail as mine.
Can he pour health into his veins,
Or cool the fever's restless pains?
Can he (worn down in Nature's course)
New-brace his feeble nerves with force?
Can he (how vain is mortal power!)
Stretch life beyond the destined hour?

Consider, man; weigh well thy frame;
The king, the beggar is the same.
Dust form'd us all. Each breathes his day,
Then sinks into his native clay.

Beneath a venerable yew,
That in the lonely churchyard grew,
Two Ravens sate. In solemn croak
Thus one, his hungry friend, bespoke.

“Methinks I scent some rich repast;
The savour strengthens with the blast;
Snuff then, the promised feast inhale—
I taste the carcase in the gale.
Near yonder trees, the farmer’s steed,
From toil and every drudgery freed,
Hath groan’d his last—a dainty treat!
To birds of taste, delicious meat.”

A Sexton busy at his trade,
To hear their chat, suspends his spade.
Death struck him with no farther thought,
Than merely as the fees he brought.
“Was ever two such blundering fowls?
In brains and manners less than owls!
Blockheads,” says he, “learn more respect:
Know ye on whom ye thus reflect?
In this same grave (who does me right,
Must own the work is strong and tight)
The Squire that yon fair hall possess’d,
To-night shall lay his bones at rest.
Whence could the gross mistake proceed?
The Squire was somewhat fat indeed;
What then? The meanest bird of prey
Such want of sense could ne’er betray:
For sure some difference must be found
(Suppose the smelling organ, sound)
In carcases, (say what we can)
Or where’s the dignity of man?”

With due respect to human race,
The Ravens undertook the case.
In such similitude of scent,
Man ne'er could think reflections meant,
As epicures extol a treat,
And seem their savoury words to eat,
They praised dead horse, luxurious food,
The venison of the prescient brood!

The Sexton's indignation moved,
The mean comparison reproved;
Their undiscerning palate blamed,
Which two-legg'd carrion thus defamed.

Reproachful speech from either side
The want of argument supplied:
They rail, revile—as often ends
The contest of disputing friends.

“Hold,” says the fowl, “since human pride
With confutation ne'er complied,
Let's state the case, and then refer
The knotty point; for taste may err.”
As thus he spoke, from out the mould
An Earth-worm, huge of size, unroll'd
His monstrous length. They straight agree
To choose him as their referee:
So to th' experience of his jaws,
Each states the merits of the cause.

He paused, and with a solemn tone,
Thus made his sage opinion known:

“On carcases of every kind
This maw hath elegantly dined;
Provoked by luxury or need,
On beast, on fowl, on man, I feed;

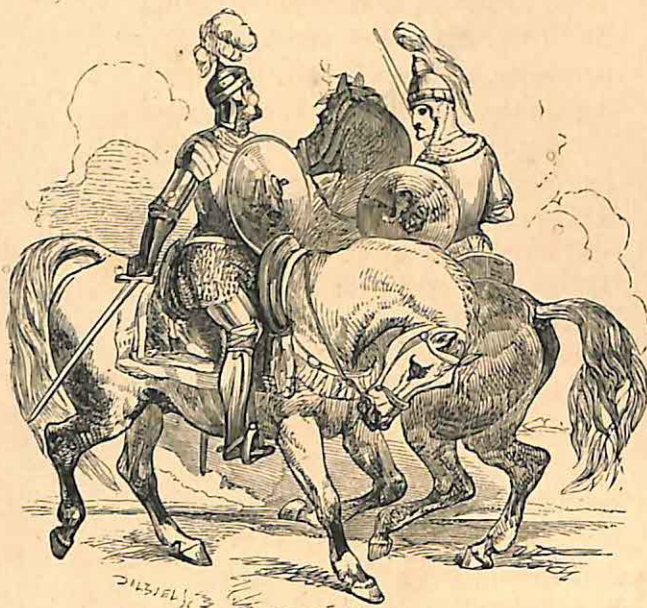
Such small distinction's in the savour,
By turns I choose the fancied flavour:
Yet I must own (that human beast)
A glutton, is the rankest feast.
Man, cease this boast ; for human pride
Hath various tracts to range beside.
The prince who kept the world in awe,
The judge whose dictate fix'd the law,
The rich, the poor, the great, the small,
Are levell'd—death confounds 'em all.
Then think not that we reptiles share
Such cates, such elegance of fare ;
The only true and real good
Of man, was never vermin's food :
'Tis seated in th' immortal mind ;
Virtue distinguishes mankind,
And that (as yet ne'er harbour'd here)
Mounts with the soul, we know not where.
So, good-man Sexton, since the case
Appears with such a dubious face,
To neither I the cause determine,
For different tastes please different vermin.”¹

¹ In this Fable (the last in the earlier editions) we are impressed with the fact that there is no distinction beyond the grave, but that which

“Is seated in the immortal mind ;
Virtue distinguishes mankind,”

and persuades us to labour to attain that great distinction.





SUPPLEMENTARY FABLE.

AY AND NO.

IN Fable all things hold discourse ;
 Then words, no doubt, must talk of course.
 Once on a time, near Cannon Row,
 Two hostile adverbs, Ay and No,¹

¹ "Ay and No." This Fable was not included in the earlier editions, but is to be found in nearly all those issued during the present century. It was probably first published in "Swift's Miscellanies," where it appears with sundry other pieces by Gay, which have likewise been included in recent editions of the poet's works. "Ay and No" is to be found in the following editions of the Fables which we have examined:—1793, 1806, 1808 (two editions), 1812, 1816 (two editions), 1820, 1824, 1826, 1828, 1834, 1854, 1857, 1866, 1870.

Were hastening to the field of fight,
 And front to front stood opposite.
 Before each general join'd the van,
 Ay, the more courteous knight, began :—
 “Stop, peevish, Particle ! beware !
 I'm told you are not such a bear,
 But sometimes yield when offer'd fair.
 Suffer yon folks awhile to tattle—
 'Tis we who must decide the battle.
 Whene'er we war on yonder stage,
 With various fate and equal rage,
 The nation trembles at each blow
 That No gives Ay, and Ay gives No ;
 Yet, in expensive long contention,
 We gain nor office, grant, nor pension.
 Why, then, should kinsfolk quarrel thus ?
 (For two of you make one of us.)
 To some wise statesman let us go,
 Where each his proper use may know :
 He may admit two such commanders,
 And make those wait who served in
 Flanders.

Let's quarter on a great man's tongue,
 A treasury-lord, not Master Young.
 Obsequious at his high command.
 Ay shall march forth to tax the land ;
 Impeachments, No can best resist,
 And Ay support the Civil List :
 Ay, quick as Cæsar, wins the day,
 And No, like Fabius, by delay.
 Sometimes in mutual sly disguise,
 Let Ay's seem No's, and No's seem Ay's ;

Ay's be, in courts, denials meant,
And No's, in bishops give consent."

Thus Ay proposed—and, for reply,
No, for the first time, answer'd "Ay!"
They parted with a thousand kisses,
And fight e'er since for pay, like Swisses.



APPENDIX.

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY.

THE attempt to compile a fairly accurate and comprehensive list of the editions of Gay's Fables has been attended with considerable difficulty, owing to the peculiar nature of his works, coupled with the fact that, as far as we are aware, no complete collection of the writings of this talented author exists.

The British Museum possesses a considerable number of editions of the Fables, and the list of Gay's works included in the printed Catalogue of the National Library covers a wide field, containing over two hundred entries; the "*Bibliotheca Devoniensis*," published in 1852 (which ought to be a reliable guide), has less than a dozen entries, and is therefore of no practical value. In the present list, in addition to those mentioned in the Catalogue of the British Museum, many editions are included which are not found in the National Collection, the compiler having, for many years, sought out copies of every obtainable edition of the works of this notable Devonshire poet, and while this list is not submitted as an exhaustive one, seeing that information of new editions here and there continues to arrive, it is to be hoped this first effort to produce such a bibliography as follows will be of service to other collectors, and assist all students of this important branch of literature.

As will be seen, the Fables have passed through numerous editions, and still retain their popularity. They have been translated into several of the European languages

and some of the vernaculars of India; several editions have also appeared in America. One curious fact with regard to these Fables may be mentioned to show their popularity: it has happened that two and even three editions have appeared in one year, the work being produced simultaneously in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Paris. The first edition of Gay's Fables (First Series) appeared in 1727, and subsequent editions in 1728, 1729, 1733, 1736, and 1737. The Second Series was published after Gay's death, in 1738, and quickly ran through several editions. The first issue of the combined series appears to have been in 1750, and during the next hundred years it is estimated that some sixty or seventy editions appeared. The most noteworthy of these was published by Stockdale in 1793. It is printed in large type and contains a fine series of plates by Blake, Lovegrove, W. Skelton, Wilson, Grainger, Audinet, Cook, and Mazell. Those by Blake are especially admired, and render the edition, which is a scarce one, of peculiar value. It is curious to note that in the same year another large type edition appeared (a copy of which is in our collection) that does not appear to be known to collectors. The plates are almost uniform with those in Stockdale's edition, but of much inferior merit, and being printed in oval, two on a page, are not by any means so effective. Very few of the plates in this edition (published by Darton and Harvey) are signed, the only name which appears being that of G. Neagle. The engravers of the plates in the earlier editions of the Fables (First Series) were G. Van der Gucht, P. Fourdrinier, and others, the drawings being furnished by I. Wootton and W. Kent. These plates stand at the head of every fable, and are of uniform size, occupying half a page only; but in the Second Series the plates are published separately.

The engraver of the latter was G. Scotin, and the delineator, H. Gravelot.

These plates appear to have been used in all subsequent editions up to, and including that of 1757. After this date came many inferior editions, but none worthy of particular notice, save those illustrated by Thomas Bewick, first published in 1779, and repeated in several subsequent editions.

Of course, many inferior and badly printed editions have been published, from time to time, without any cuts at all, and others have been used as vehicles for instruction, notably those edited by the Rev. W. Coxe, to which voluminous explanatory notes are appended, as well as a full and critical biography.

Passing over the various editions issued for the press by the present publisher, we may note that the last which appeared was that of 1882, edited by Mr. Austin Dobson. We give in another part some fuller notes respecting this and other editions, our present purpose being merely to point out a few of the interesting features of the more noteworthy volumes, by way of a hint to collectors in their search for the best editions of our author. It will be noticed that we have not attempted to follow the usual bibliographical rules as regards size, style, pagination, and so forth, which would have been done had this volume been meant for the use of persons solely interested in bibliography, instead of for the delectation of the "courteous reader."

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE VARIOUS EDITIONS OF GAY'S FABLES.

| | | |
|---|------------------|--------------|
| FABLES. By Mr. GAY. Printed for J. Tonson and J. Watts. | <i>London</i> | YEAR 1727 |
| The frontispiece has an engraving of a Mask. Svo. Title, and Dedication to the Duke of Cumberland by John Gay, 2 leaves. Table, 2 leaves. Poetical Intro- duction, 3 leaves. Pp. 194. The Vol. contains 50 Fables, each with an engraving at the head, on the same leaf as the letterpress. Engravings by Four- drinier, Van der Gucht, and others. | | |
| FABLES. By Mr. GAY. The Second Edition. | | 1728 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. The Third Edition. | <i>London</i> | 1729 |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. The Fourth Edition. Same. | <i>London</i> | 1733 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. | <i>Amsterdam</i> | 1734 |
| FABLES, in One Volume, Complete. | <i>London</i> | 1736 |
| Portrait and Epitaph on Frontispiece. A mask on title. Engraving to each Fable. Life by Dr. Johnson at end of volume. | | |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. The Fifth Edition. (Same.) | <i>London</i> | 1737 |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. Volume the Second. | <i>London</i> | 1738 |
| Printed for J. and P. Knapton, etc. Frontispiece, Monument with Epitaph. Portrait on Title. Sixteen Fables, with full-page Illustrations by Gravelot. | | |

- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Second Series. Second Edition. YEAR
- FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. The Sixth Edition. (Same.) *London* 1746
- FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. Volume the Second. The Third Edition. (Same.) *London* 1747
- FABLES, IN TWO PARTS. By the late Mr. GAY. *Printed in the year* 1750
 No printer's name or place of publication. No engraving of any kind.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *Glasgow* 1750
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. 1751
- FABLES, IN TWO PARTS. Printed by Robert Urie, for J. Gilmour. *Glasgow* 1752
 Mask on title and vignette to each Fable.
- FABLES. Printed for Alexander McKenzie. *Glasgow*
 No date; no printer's name; but probably by Urie or Foulis.
- FABLES. By Mr. GAY. Seventh Edition. *London* 1753
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Two Vols. *London* 1753-5
 In large type, and illustrated with upwards of Sixty spirited engravings, by Van der Gucht, Scotin, etc.
- FABLES. By Mr. GAY. *London* 1754
 No printer's name. Portrait on Frontispiece, and tail-piece showing interior of printing office at the end of Volume; but no other illustrations.
- FABLES. *London* 1754
 Vignette of printing press, and printers at work on title, and repeated on last page, but no other engraving.

- FABLES (GAY'S). Printed for B. Creak. Thirty Fables, each illustrated. *London, no date, but previous to* [1755]
 Epitomiz'd with Short Poems applicable to each occasion, extracted from the most celebrated Moralists, antient and modern, for the use of Schools. [Dedication signed D. Bellamy.]
- FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In two Volumes (two in one). 8vo. C. Hitch, and others *London.* 1757
 Monument on frontispiece. Vignette portrait on Title. Illustrations to each Fable by G. Van der Gucht, and others.
- FABLES IN TWO PARTS. Printed for C. Hitch and others. Another Edition. *London* 1757
 Vignette portrait on title page.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed for J. James, in New Bond Street *London* 1758
 Portrait on frontispiece. No other illustration.
- FABLES DE M. GAY. Suivies du Poëme de l'Eventail. Le tout traduit de l'Anglois. Par Madame De Keralio. A Londres, et se trouvent à Paris, chez Duchesne, Libraire, rue Saint Jacques, au Temple du Goût. 1759
 This translation is in prose.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *Dublin* 1760
- FABLES, IN TWO PARTS. Printed by Robert and Andrew Foulis. *Glasgow* 1761
 Wrote for the amusement of His Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *Glasgow* 1762
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed for C. Hitch and others. *London* 1762
 Frontispiece. A Mask. Vignette portrait on title. Full page illustrations to Fables.

- | FABLES. | London | YEAR
1763 |
|---|-------------------|--------------|
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed by A. Donaldson and J. Reid. | Edinburgh | 1764 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. | Newcastle-on-Tyne | 1765 |
| FABLES. Printed for J. James. | London | 1766 |
| Portrait on frontispiece half length in oval, "Gay" at top; below, "In Witt a Man, Simplicity a Child." J. Jameson, Sculp. No other engraving. Although paging is similar to edition of 1754, the type is of a new setting, and the type ornaments are different. | | |
| FABLES. Le Nuovo favole di G. G. Tradotte dall' originale Inglese (by G. F. Giorgetti). | Venezia | 1767 |
| FABLES. Printed for W. Strahan. | London | 1769 |
| Frontispiece, engraving of mask, etc., surmounted by halo. Sixty-seven illustrations to the Fables. None of them bear the name of the designer or engraver. Many of them are fac-similes of those that afterwards appeared in Stockdale's Edition of 1793. | | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed and sold by M. Luckman. No date, but entered in B. M. Catalogue as 1770. | Coventry | [1770] |
| Frontispiece Illustrations to Fables. | | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poetical Works in Four Vols. Printed by James Potts) | Dublin | 1770 |
| The Fables occupy the whole of Vol. 4. | | |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. Printed for Strahan and others. | London | 1772 |
| Frontispiece of Monument. Illustrations to Fables printed separately, two on a page. | | |
| FABLES. Another Edition. | | 1772 |
| Without Plates. | | |

- | | YEAR |
|---|--------|
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. <i>Altenburgh</i> | 1772 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY Printed for W. Smith and W. Wilson. <i>Dublin</i> | 1772-3 |
| In two volumes (the Fourth Edition), roughly executed cuts. The Second Volume bears date 1772, it was probably issued with a new title in the following year, as the title to the new Volumes bears the later date. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poems, etc., British Poets, Vol. XXX.) <i>Edinburgh</i> | 1773 |
| FABLES OF Mr. JOHN GAY. With an Italian Trans- lation by Gian Francesco Giorgetti. Printed for T. Davies. <i>London</i> | 1773 |
| With a preface. No illustrations. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. <i>London</i> | 1775 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poetical Works, in Three Vols.) At the Apollo Press, by the Martins. <i>Edinburgh, Anno</i> | 1777 |
| Fables occupy the whole of Vol. 3. | |
| FABLES. Fabulæ selectæ auctore JOHANNÉ GAY. Latine redditæ (in Verse) Lat. and Eng. By C. Anstey. J. Dodsley. <i>Londini</i> | 1777 |
| No engravings. | |
| FABLES, IN TWO PARTS. [No printer.] Sold by J. James and others. <i>London</i> | 1777 |
| Not illustrated. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. In One Volume complete. Printed for J. Buckland and others. <i>London</i> | 1778 |
| No illustrations. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. <i>Newcastle</i> | 1779 |

- | | YEAR |
|--|------|
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Works of the English Poets. With Prefaces by Samuel Johnson.) Printed by J. Nichols, <i>London</i> | 1779 |
| The Fables are in Vol. 2, pp. 25-197. | |
| FABLES. <i>Paris</i> | 1782 |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In One Volume. Complete. Printed and sold by S. Harward <i>Glo'cester</i> | 1783 |
| This edition has no plates. | |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In One Volume complete. Buckland, Strahan, etc. <i>London</i> | 1783 |
| Mask, Frontispiece. Illustrations on separate pages, two on each page. | |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In one Volume complete. <i>London</i> | 1785 |
| (Same as last.) | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed for Buckland, Rivington, and others. <i>London</i> | 1788 |
| Contains 66 cuts by Thomas Bewick. | |
| FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In one Volume complete. Printed for Rivington and others. <i>London</i> | 1792 |
| Mask on frontispiece, with cuts to each Fable. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed for W. Osborne and others. <i>London</i> | 1792 |
| Portrait on title with epitaph, and illustrations to each Fable. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed by John Bell. Complete in One Volume. <i>London</i> | 1793 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. With a Life of the Author, and embellished with 70 plates. Engraving. Two Volumes. Royal 8vo. Printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly. <i>London</i> | 1793 |

Vol. I.—Engraving on title page, a mask surmounted by halo, "Brown, Sculpt." xi, dedication and contents; 225, Fables. Fifty plates, on single pages, by Blake, W. Skelton, P. Mazell, Audinet, Wilson, and Lovegrove

Vol. II.—Engraving on title page, bust of the poet in bas-relief, surmounted by symbols of music and poetry. "J Hall, direxit." vii, advt. and contents—187 (1—160, Fables; 163—175, Life; 177—187, List of Subscribers). Eighteen plates. (Engraved title to each Vol. would make up the number to 70.) The engraving to the "Life" apparently represents Gay's tomb in Westminster Abbey, with Pope's epitaph. "Wilson, Sculpt."

The Fable "Aye and No" appears in this Edition.

FABLES. By JOHN GAY. With a Life of the Author, and embellished with a plate to each Fable. Printed by Darton and Harvey for Rivington and others. *London* 1793

This is a fine large type edition, the plates in which differ but slightly from the preceding, although they do not bear any engraver's name. The plates are two on a page, whereas Stockdale's are single plates.

FABLES. Les Animaux offrant leurs services à l'Homme. Fable imitée de Gay. Prelong. 1793

FABLES. *London* 1795

FABLES. E. Newbery. *London* 1796
Frontispiece and numerous woodcuts by Thomas Bewick, different from those by John Bewick. First edition with these cuts.

FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Illustrated, with Notes and the Life of the Author, by W. Coxe, Rector of Bemerton. *Salisbury* 1796

FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poems, etc.) *Manchester* 1797

- | | | YEAR |
|---------------------|---|--------|
| FABLES. | York | 1797 |
| FABLES. | See Columbian Library, Vol. II. New York | 1797 |
| FABLES. | Interprete C. Anstey. <i>Londini et Balthoniæ</i> | 1798 |
| FABLES. | Printed by Luckman and Suffield. Sold by Brooke and Macklin, and others, London. <i>Coventry</i> No engravings. | 1798 |
| FABLES. | Illustrated, with Notes and Life of the Author, by William Coxe, Rector of Bemerton. Printed and sold by J. Easton, etc. <i>Salisbury</i> | 1798 |
| FABLES. | By JOHN GAY. In Two Volumes. Printed by Pat Wogan. The Fifth Edition. <i>Dublin</i> Rough cuts to each Fable. | 1799 |
| FABLES. | By JOHN GAY. Illustrated, with Notes, Historical and Explanatory, by William Coxe, A.M., etc. A new Edition, with emblematical frontispiece. <i>London and Salisbury</i> | [1800] |
| FABLES. | By JOHN GAY. Printed by P. Didot, the Elder. <i>Paris</i> To which are added Fables by Edward Moore. Gay's contain both series of Fables. | 1800 |
| FABLES. | By JOHN GAY Whittingham. <i>London</i> Frontispiece, a mask; eagle on title. Vignette to each Fable. | 1801 |
| LE FABLIER ANGLAIS. | Fables choisies de JEAN GAY. Moore, Wilkie, etc.; traduites en Français, avec le Texte Anglais, etc. Par M. A. Amar du Rivier. De Guilleminet. <i>Paris</i> Short life of Gay. Portrait on front. Fifty Fables. | 1802 |

- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *Paris* YEAR 1802
Contains also Moore's Fables, and Gray's "Elegy."
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *Chester* 1802
- FABLES. *London* 1805
- FABLES. A New Edition. Printed at the Minerva Press, for Lane, Newman & Co. *London* 1806
Engraving of "The Lady and the Wasp" as frontispiece.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed by Savage and Easingwood. *London* 1806
Illustrations to each Fable. Style of Bewick.
Woodcut of flying eagle on title; mask on frontispiece, no engraver's name.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. *York* 1806
Cuts by Bewick.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. C. Whittingham. *London* 1808
With Life. Portrait on title. Illustrations to each Fable.
- FABLES. Another Edition. *London* 1808
Illustrated.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Illustrated. Edited by William Coxe, A.M., etc., Rector of Bemerton. Fourth Edition. Printed for Vernon, Hood, and Sharpe. *London* 1810
Allegorical frontispiece, representing Simplicity.
- FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In One Volume. Complete. Two figures of Flying Eagle. Printed by J. McCreery, Black-Horse-court, for F. C. and J. Rivington, J. Walker, etc., etc., etc. *London* 1810

This is a fac-simile reprint of Savage and Easingwood's Edition of 1806—not a *re-issue*, but a reprint—page for page: the catchwords are the same; but there are *three* points of difference:—

1. Savage and Easingwood's edition terminates at p. 224, M'Creery's at p. 222; this is due to the former having an additional leaf between the two parts, and which is paged.
2. Savage and Easingwood's has on p. 224, "Savage and Easingwood, Printers, Bedford Bury." There is no imprint on that of M'Creery.
3. The latter has a Table of Contents of two pages, not paged, and at the base of the second, "J. M'Creery, Printer, Black-Horse-court, Fleet-street, London."

All the woodcuts of the 1806 Edition are included in that of 1810.

FABLES DE GAY. Traduites en vers Français, avec gravures. Chez Ancelle, Libraire, etc. *Paris* 1811
Portrait, frontispiece; Life; seven illustrations.
First series of fifty Fables only.

FABLES. Printed by Ruffy and Evans, and sold by Darton & Co. *London* 1811
Embellished with 100 engravings on wood, designed and executed by Branston.

FABLES. (See the Poetical Works of JOHN GAY. Suttaby, Evans & Co.) *London* 1811

FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Chiswick Press. 1812
Life by Dr. Johnson. Illustrations to each Fable. Pretty vignette on title. Appropriate tail-pieces. Style of Bewick.

FABLES. *London* 1813

FABLES. *Havant* 1816

- FABLES. By the late Mr. GAY. In One Vol. complete. Printed by J. M'Creery, for Rivington and others. *London* 1816
 Front., mask ; illustrations to each Fable.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed by T. Davidson. *London* 1816
 With Life ; portrait on title ; 70 engravings.
- FABLES. Printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall. *London* 1819
 Has an excellent portrait as frontispiece.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed at Chiswick Press. 1820
 With Life, by Dr. Johnson, and upwards of 100 illustrations.
- FABLES. *London* 1820
- FABLES. See Beauties of Æsop. A collection of Fables selected from Æsop, Gay, etc. *London* 1822
- FABLES, A SELECTION FROM. By JOHN GAY. In two parts, selected and revised by J. Plumptre, with a preface. Thomas Lovell. (Second Edition.) *Huntingdon* 1823
 Contains 46 Fables only.
- FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Jones & Co. *London* 1824
 (Diamond Poets.) Biographical Sketch, by Dr. Johnson ; portrait. Contains also "Rural Sports," "The Fan," "Shepherd's Week," "Trivia" and Ballads.
- FABLES, THIRTY-THREE ETCHINGS ILLUSTRATING. *London* 1825
 Drawn and etched by the late Charles Muss, Enamel Painter to His Majesty. Published for the benefit of the widow and family. No letterpress.

- | | YEAR. |
|--|-------|
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Printed by J. F. Dove. (Dove's English Classics.) <i>London</i> | 1826 |
| (The Volume contains also Cotton's "Visions," in verse; Moore's "Fables for the Female Sex," with Sketches of the Author's Lines.) Includes Fables, "Rural Sports," "The Fan," "Shepherd's Week," "Trivia," and Ballads. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Chiswick Press. <i>London</i> | 1828 |
| Life by Dr. Johnson. One hundred illustrations. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. See "Flowers of Fable," culled from Epictetus, Croxall, Gay, Moore, La Fontaine, and others. Vizetelly. <i>London</i> | 1832 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Longman and others. <i>London</i> | 1834 |
| Mask on frontispiece. Each Fable illustrated. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. With translations into Uran Poetry. By Raja Kali Krishna Badahur. English and Hindustani. <i>Calcutta</i> | 1836 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. With translation into Bengali Poetry. By Raja Kali Krishna Badahur. In English and Bengali. <i>Calcutta</i> | 1836 |
| FABLES, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED. By the most esteemed European and Oriental Authors With an Intro- ductory Dissertation on the History of Fable, comprising Biographical Notices of the most eminent Fabulists. By G. Moir Bussey. Charles Tilt. <i>London</i> | 1839 |
| Illustrated by numerous engravings, designed by J. J. Grandville. Gay is well represented in this large and interesting collection. | |
| FABLES. With Elucidations by Archdeacon Coxe. <i>London</i> | 1841 |
| Sixty-eight woodcuts. | |

| | | |
|---|---------------------|---------------|
| FABLES. | <i>Alnwick</i> | YEAR. 1842 |
| FABLES. (Phonetic Edition.) | Lundun. <i>Bath</i> | 1849 |
| FABLES, AND OTHER POEMS. (See British Poets, Cabinet Edition.) Vol. II. | <i>London</i> | 1851 |
| FABLES DE GAY. Whittaker. | <i>London</i> | 1853 |
| Traduites en vers Français par Le Chevalier de Chatelain. English and French. Contains only 50 Fables, comprising First Series. Dedicated to the Duke of Wellington. | | |
| FABLES. | <i>London</i> | 1854 |
| FABLES CHOISIES. | <i>Paris</i> | 1854 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Routled | <i>London</i> | 1854 |
| With Memoir, introduction, and annotations by O. F. Owen, with 126 drawings by W. Harvey, etc., Engraved by the Brothers Dalziel. Portrait, frontis- piece. | | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poetical Works.) In Two Volumes. | <i>Boston</i> | 1854 |
| FABLES. | <i>London</i> | 1855 |
| FABLES DE GAY. Whittaker. | <i>London</i> | 1855 |
| Traduites en vers Français par Le Chevalier de Chate- lain. Fifty Fables only. Dedicated "A La Presse Anglaise." No plates. | | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Routledge. | <i>London</i> | 1857 |
| Owen's Second Edition. | | |

- | | YEAR. |
|---|---------------------|
| FABLES. Troisième édition complète, et précédée d'une préface nouvelle, et suivie de Beautés de la Poésie Anglaise. | Londres 1857 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. James Nichol. <i>Edinburgh</i> | 1859 |
| With Memoir and Critical Dissertation, by the Rev. George Gilfillan. The Volume contains also Addison's Works, and Somerville's "Chase." (One of the volumes of Nichol's Edition of the British Poets.) | |
| FABLES. (Owen's Third Edition.) Routledge. <i>London</i> | 1860 |
| FABLES. (Owen's Edition.) | <i>London</i> 1861 |
| FABLES. (4ème édition.) | <i>Londres</i> 1861 |
| FABLES. Juvenile Poetry. | <i>Paris</i> 1863 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poetical Works. In Two Vols. Little, Brown and Company.) | <i>Boston</i> 1863 |
| Fables in Vol. 2, pp. 3-182. | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. (See Poetical Works. In Two Vols.) | <i>Boston</i> 1864 |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. F. Warne. | <i>London</i> 1866 |
| (Owen's Edition.) | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY. F. Warne & Co. <i>London</i> | [1870] |
| With Memoir, Introduction, and Annotations, by Octavius Freire Owen, M.A., F.S.A. Illustrated by William Harvey. Portrait on frontispiece. (Messrs. Warne's last Edition.) | |
| FABLES. By JOHN GAY, somewhat altered by John Benson Rose. Printed for private circulation by W. Clowes & Sons. | <i>London</i> 1871 |
| Contains also a selection of other poems and fables. | |

FABLES.

London

YEAR.
1875

Contains also the Poetical Works of Addison, etc.

FABLES (By JOHN GAY), SELECTIONS FROM. For the
use of Schools in India. With Notes. Third Edition.
Pp. viii—2100. Sanskrit Press Repository. Calcutta

1880

FABLES. By JOHN GAY. Kegan Paul & Co.

London

1882

With a Memoir and Bibliographical Note, by Austin
Dobson. Portrait from a sketch in oils by Sir Godfrey
Kneller. No other illustrations.

* * NOTE.—In addition to the above, various editions of Gay's
Poetical Works have been published containing the Fables,
which are not here enumerated, and selections from the
Fables have appeared in many collections of poetry; they
have also been parodied by other writers. But the above list
contains nearly all the editions. The compiler will be glad
to receive corrections and additions.—W. H. K. W.



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Esq. With Steel Frontispiece and full Index.

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his Works. Selected and Edited, with a Biographical Introduction,
by CHARLES KENT. With Steel Portrait.

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By ROBERT SOUTHEY. Edited by Rev. J. A. ATKINSON, M.A.,
D.C.L. With Steel Portrait.

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